

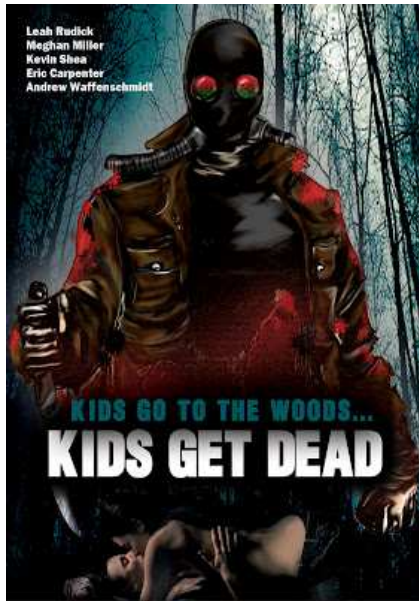
# Indie Horror Films

All genres of suspense, terror, and horror will be reviewed by Richard Gary. His address to send preview copies supplied upon request to rbf55@msn.com.

Friday, August 3, 2012

## DVD Review: *Kids Go to the Woods... Kids Get Dead*

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### *Kids Go to the Woods... Kids Get Dead*

Written, produced, directed by Michael Hall

Dark Star Entertainment / Planetworks Enterprises, 2009 / 2012

85 minutes, USD \$14.95

[Darkstarentertainment.net](http://Darkstarentertainment.net)

[Kidsgetdead.com](http://Kidsgetdead.com)

[MVDvisual.com](http://MVDvisual.com)

There is a large difference, in my mind (such as it is), between a horror film and a slasher one, even if they overlap to some extent. This definitely falls into the latter category. But there's nothing wrong with that...

Michael Hall writes, produces and directs his first full length here, with a mix of '80s-style clichés and some interesting updated touches, which are just enough to send this into the interesting aisle. Supposedly, the idea and film's name germinated from watching *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*, which he described as this release's title. Not surprisingly, a lot of the elements of that 1980 piece of cinema appear here.

For example, rather than following the recent done-to-death found footage route (thank you for that), he presents this as a '80s film that was taped over some VHS home movies. There are also some (fake) commercials and a horror hostess that interrupts the film to bookend the "ads" and return to the story. This is part of a non-existing program called *Midnight Movie Madness* – though I can see this as part of a series – presented by Candy Adams (a name take-off of the non-sexy Cindy Adams?) played with lots of cleavage and innuendo by Carly Goodspeed. While a smart idea, it is also one of the just misses of the film in that Candy is more goofy than goddess, e.g., Elvira (the obvious go-to comparison, I know) or Ivonna Cadaver, nor does it match the over-the-top campiness of, say, Matilda LeStrange or Morella. But Goodspeed shows she's game and seems to be having fun with her role.

The premise of *KGTTW...KGD* is that a group of (high school? college?) friends get together to celebrate the birthday of one of their clique, who is forced to bring along her younger brother by her parents. He is reading a horror novel, in which a gas-masked killer terrorizes the woods, and then appears to come to life to start picking them (and others) off, until there is an adequate body count. Unfortunately, *how* (and I won't give away the plot line) this becomes a reality is never explained.

Perhaps the point is to – er – point out the clichés of the '80s straight-to-VHS films that glutted the market, and in that case it was successful, though the fact that I wonder about it means it's not as

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effective as it was meant to be, in that case. Here are some examples, and please know I don't mean this as whiney as I make it, mostly.

There was a *MadTV* sketch called "Pretty White Kids with Problems" (great theme song by Lisa Loeb, but I digress...) about older actors playing teen roles in over-dramatic television shows (can anyone say Pacey? Dylan?). This is what we are presented with in this film, as well. Everyone here seems to be at least in their late 20s (didn't spot any bald patches, at least). This is especially egregious in the younger brother character, Scott (played by the great monikered Andrew Waffenschmidt). Either he is supposed to be around 15, or he is, as they say in New England, *wicked retahdid* (no insult meant).

Here is the group that takes off into the woods to be to potential killer-fodder: there's said brotehr, the birthday girl and the lummoX who is trying to bed her, her bestie and the lummoX who is trying to get past third base with *her*, and a lesbian couple who have been having home runs apparently many, many, *many* times (and supply most of the nudity. The two guys are just *brutal* to the equally lecherous (in his own way) younger bro, and I was sitting there listening to them talk and smirk, just *hoping* the dude in the mast would show up soon to shut them the hell *up*.

The acting by this troupe is passable, but you don't really get that they're taking this too seriously, while the director seems to be taking it *much* too seriously, especially for a supposed comedy horror (as it is listed on IMDB). The one who ares the best, though, is the birthday girl, Casey, excellently played by Leah Rudick. She definitely comes across as the most talented of the group in this department.



Leah Rudick

As for the ancillary characters, there is the nutsy older local who runs the gas station / convenience store, a Vietnam Vet who warns the hero/ines to stay off the moors... I mean out of the woods. He is especially played to a chewing the curtain rods level (I'm thinking purposefully) by Kevin Shea. Then there is the totally ineffectual town cops who are too busy threatening the local said Veteran to stop bothering the "kids" rather than to notice that anything is amiss in the burg.

Now there is the killer, played forcefully and effectively by Joseph Campellone (*paisan!*). Unfortunately, the name of this beast is, well, "The Killer." No fancy "The Shape" or "Jason" that's memorable. The audience never sees his face, of course.

I must say, though, for a film shot for \$10K in the woods around Orange County, NY (the Middletown / Goshen area), it has a good look. There's lots of gore for the buck (though they need to work just a *bit* on the formula for the blood mixture), and that is a plus, and even a couple of good shocks (unfortunately, one is spoiled by the trailer).

The one stereotype that really bugged me, though, was that the killer always walks at an even pace while the youngsters he is chasing run like mad. And yet, when they inevitably trip and fall (I thought, at the time, "really?"), he's a few feet right behind them. And, of course, they roll over onto their back (or just lay on their front) and cry while the guy with the knife walks over to them, rather than getting their asses up and running more. Didn't like that in the '80s, and it *still* annoys me now.

As the slasher genre goes, this is pretty par, though for the production financials, that's saying a lot in the positive column. Plus, the film gives a whole new meaning to the expression, "Not on my face" that alone makes this worth the watch.

<Strong>Trailer: </strong>

<iframe width="560" height="315" src="http://www.youtube.com/embed/MHrIMnl6cMc" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>

<Strong>To view film online: </strong>

<iframe width="560" height="315" src="http://www.youtube.com/embed/jUFIFAmtZkk" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>

Posted by **Robert Barry Francos** at 3:01 PM

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