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Case Number 24384



Zombie A-Hole

[MVD Visual](#) // 2012 // 108 Minutes // Unrated
Reviewed by Judge Paul Pritchard // August 23rd, 2012

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Scales of Justice

Video:	85
Audio:	85
Extras:	70
Acting:	90
Story:	89
Judgment:	88

Perp Profile

Studio: [MVD Visual](#)
Video Formats:
 • 1.78:1 Anamorphic
Audio Formats:
 • Dolby Digital 2.0 Stereo (English)
Subtitles:
 • None
Running Time: 108 Minutes
Release Year: 2012
MPAA Rating: Unrated
Genres:
 • [Action](#)
 • [Comedy](#)
 • [Horror](#)

All Rise...

Judge Paul Pritchard doesn't need to be undead to be considered an a-hole.

The Charge

Unstoppable...Unrelenting...Undead.

Opening Statement

To say the zombie genre is overcrowded would be a massive understatement. Every month seems to see more and more titles released, proving these creatures really won't die. Unfortunately with most of these releases substituting homage for originality, one can safely ignore the vast majority of them.

Sometimes, though, just sometimes, a filmmaker comes along with a fresh take on a well-worn genre that completely reinvigorates it. One such filmmaker is Dustin Mills. Having impressed with [The Puppet Monster Massacre](#), Mills turns his hand to the zombie genre, throws in a little Western vibe, and delivers **Zombie A-Hole**, a relentlessly entertaining, not to mention fresh, horror-comedy.

Facts of the Case

In a world not unlike our own, three strangers, one a cowboy (Josh Eal), one a one-eyed woman bent on revenge (Jessica Daniels), and one a quiet young man with a dark past (Brandon Salkil), embark on a road trip to locate and destroy their mutual nemesis: a suit-wearing, murderous zombie who has wronged each of them.

Zombies, it seems, come in different flavors: viral, magik ("w with a k"), and demonic; and wouldn't you know it: this goddamn a-hole is of the demonic order: the most badass, hard to kill of all.



The Evidence

Where [The Puppet Monster Massacre](#) saw writer-director Dustin Mills make a more than competent entry into the world of filmmaking, his sophomore effort, **Zombie A-Hole**, sees the filmmaker really hit his stride with a confident, ballsy, and insanely entertaining blend of genres.

Far from your typical zombie movie, **Zombie A-hole** is just about as far removed from a lazy George A. Romero ([Dawn of the Dead](#)) inspired ripoff as you can get. Rather than a shuffling, brain-craving corpse, the zombie a-hole of the title is a sharply dressed, calculated, and sadistic killer who has plans that go far beyond merely finding his next meal. The world he inhabits is not far removed from our own. Initially at least, it's questionable just how successfully Mills can persuade his audience to go along with the somewhat audacious plot.

Opening up with a brother confronting his murderous twin, **Zombie A-Hole** reeks of a seventies exploitation flick from the off. Its gritty looks, not to mention its propensity for full-frontal nudity, smacks of the grindhouse, yet nothing about the introduction suggests a supernatural element to the story. This is where Mills' writing comes to the fore, as he gradually introduces the three main players, a religious cowboy, a one-eyed vigilante seeking revenge, and the aforementioned brother, whilst the murderous zombie is slowly brought into play in brief, but gory, kill scenes. As we get to know the three main protagonists better, the world of **Zombie A-Hole**, and the rules that govern it, are laid out. As the three leads find themselves drawn together by their experiences, the origin of the zombie is pieced together, thanks in no small part to an beautifully animated sequence that shows a level of artistry few small productions would aspire to.

Admittedly some of the plot developments in the film—in particular a wise old miniature windup corpse—come way out of left field, but the sheer insanity of what is unfolding is utterly captivating and I, for one, was left with no other option than to just sit

back and go along for the ride. I urge you to do the same. I'd not be so bold as to compare **Zombie A-Hole** to the John Carpenter classic [Big Trouble in Little China](#), but I was certainly reminded of it as the two films share a similarly chaotic structure, and a determination to entertain at all costs that as a film lover I hugely appreciate.

Despite its obviously limited budget, **Zombie A-Hole** is a visual triumph. Mills had already revealed a knack for delivering eye candy with **The Puppet Monster Massacre**, but **Zombie A-Hole** looks and feels far more cinematic. Recalling the works of splatter-meister Lucio Fulci ([The Beyond](#)), Mills makes good use of shadows to partially conceal his zombie, and introduces a genuine sense of dread whenever he is stalking his next victim. Action scenes, though few and far between, range from the ridiculous to the down right cool. Our introduction to the cowboy, who goes by the name Frank Fulci, sees him enter a cabin filled with the undead. As he proceeds to annihilate the ghouls with his twin pistols, Mills unleashes some unexpectedly dynamic camerawork that, coupled with the intentionally damaged look of the print, adds to the cool midnight movie vibe.

The three leads are superb, with Brandon Salkil really standing out. Salkil is tasked with playing three roles: good guy Castor; Castor's murderous brother, Pollux; and Pollux's undead persona, the titular **Zombie A-Hole**. It's in the role of the **Zombie** that Salkil really impresses, relying on movements and gestures, rather than dialogue to convey the (evil) spirit of the character, Salkil really brings the ghoul to life. Like Salkil, Josh Eal and Jessica Daniels are totally onboard with Mills' vision, and wisely choose to underplay some of the more bizarre elements to ensure the film doesn't slip into camp.

The DVD release of **Zombie A-Hole** doesn't sport the most impressive transfer, with an often washed out look to colors. Detail levels are generally good, and the picture is sharp for the most part. Blacks are solid. The visual approach taken by Mills, however, means that any "flaws" are most likely intentional. The soundtrack is unremarkable, but delivers clear dialogue and effects. One slight criticism I had revolved around the score, provided by rock band Slug, which is often a little too low in the mix, and the realities of low-

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Closing Str

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When approaching any low-budget horror—particularly one with such an outlandish premise—you can only hope that its execution comes close to matching the enthusiasm of the creative team behind it. With **Zombie A-Hole**, any fears of yet another letdown can be set aside. This is the real deal: a true, bona fide cult hit in the making. Dustin Mills is a filmmaker to keep an eye on.

The Verdict

Not guilty.

Give us your feedback!

Did we give **Zombie A-Hole** a fair trial? [yes](#) / [no](#)

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