

# 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.

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## DVD Review: *Zombie A-Hole*

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Images from the Internet



### *Zombie A-Hole*

Written and directed by Dustin W. Mills

108 minutes, 2012

[Facebook.com/zombieahole](https://www.facebook.com/zombieahole)

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

Is this one of the best names of a film recently, or what? You really do know exactly what you're getting, and this certainly won't disappoint. After a summer of blockbuster films costing in the hundreds of millions of dollars to make, my interest was keenly kept with a central cast of three or four, and a \$3,000 budget. Shot on a single Cannon 60D DSLR and made to look like film with wear marks and all, there's no wimpy vampires, shirtless werewolves or annoyingly monotone women. No, we get a fashionable, mobster-natty zombie.

As is clearly and succinctly explained in the film, there are four kinds of zombie. The last one is the least used, which is an undead – or infected – person possessed by a demon. Hey, it's posited in the opening scene, so I don't believe I'm giving much away here; this cause for zombism has been mostly used in foreign films such as the *Night of the Demons* cycle (1988-1997), the original [*\*Rec*] film franchise (2007-20012), though in the States there is the *Evil Dead* series (1981-1992). So there aren't multitudes of flesh eaters crawling through the woods or cities ready to eat your brains. Rather, a serial killer who dies, comes back as said a-hole demon, and goes around killing identical twin women. The undead Pollux is himself a twin, the latter of whom, Castor, is searching for his brother to end the reign of terror.

And why twins? Two reasons (pun not intended). First, in this story, the demon can gain power to unlock the gates of you-know-where if he absorbs the energy from the twins he kills due to their higher psychic abilities to communicate with each other (yeah, I know, it's kind of weak, but original). But the real reason is explained by Mills himself in the hilarious commentary: half the number of actors and twice the number of kills, as he gets to do in each one twice. Brilliant, in its own way.

One of the seemingly unwritten rules of this film is that the murdered twins are all women, each pair lives together, and one has to be murdered while the other is taking a bath or shower so the audience gets to see some nudity; Roger Corman would certainly be proud. As Dustin also points out, there are many different body shapes here, not just the standard thin with big boobs. Though a large amount of the female cast is apparently multiply tattooed.

Let's get down to the gritty. First there's Frank Fulchi (nice nod to the Italian goremeister), played

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with country-aplomb and religious fervor by Josh Eal. This religiousness is shown when he get angry when women cuss, but doesn't seem to mind when men do it. Yep, that sounds about right. As we head into the election where the Tea Party rhetoric sounds just as hypocritical, the timing is ideal for this subtle (less than subtle if intended) dig against that mentality (and I use that word loosely), though I don't believe that was necessarily where Mills was going. Played with a cowboy hat, square jaw, and lots of macho enthusiasm, Eal does a fine job of presenting a type that is familiar to horror films (e.g., Woody Harelson in *Zombieland* [2009]). This is Eal's only listed credit. His acting is kind of one note, but honestly, that is what the character dictates, so good on him for staying the course.

The female lead is Mercy (Jessica Daniels), who, during her first meeting with the title zombie, loses her twin sister Mary, as well as an eye, which we see yanked out very slowly (but not slo-mo), the optic nerve streeeeetching... Mercy doesn't take crap from anyone, not even Pollux, and even though she loses the peeper (giving her that cool, *Thriller: A Cruel Picture* (1973) look, she is ready for battle the next time they meet. Daniels is believable because I know she can certainly kick *my* ass. Of course, to show she's tough, the film has her smoking stogies like Clint "Empty Chair" Eastwood. The anger she feels is more palpable than the others, but her character is sort of secondary for most of the story, which is a shame. Daniels has one other credit, as the voice of Gwen in Dustin Mills' first film, the also wonderfully titled *The Puppet Monster Massacre* (2011) [my review [HERE](#)].

As Castor, Brandon Salkil plays him with a mixture of lantern-jaw nerd who is able to read the - I mean, *an* - ancient book of the Necromicon, and an unsure monster hunter who looks like he's about to pee his pants some of the time; or at least burst into tears. Salkil has two other film credits, including the character Wilson in the aforementioned *The Puppet Monster Massacre*.

In a dual role (as I said, twins), Salkil also portrays the title monster like he stepped out of *Sin City* (2005), full of noir machismo and a good use of body language since his face is a mask and cannot move face muscles much. With the élan of a dancer, Pollux is the exact opposite of Castor, and Salkil does well to separate the two completely in body and spirit. While sometimes his performance feels the most forced, at other times, it seems the most natural.

Essentially, this is a road trip buddy film, with Frank and Castor driving in a car and getting to know one another. The story mostly jumps back and forth between them and Pollux doing is de-twinning. Note that there is plenty of action and gore.

Speaking of blood and guts, lets get to the gristle and talk about (well, I will anyway; not expecting much of a spontaneous dialog, y'know) the SFX. Some of it looks pretty good, though you really can notice the digitization. For example, when someone's head gets pushed on a spike, you can see the layers, especially if you're like me and you slo-mo the action. But with an \$8,000 budget, what do you expect. *Titanic*? Some of the effects, honestly, are laughable, and this is part of the enjoyment. For example, when zombie Pollux spews out some *The Fly*-type sputum to melt flesh, it's obviously Silly-String. And pulled flesh is pieces of ropey, rubbery goo, apparently called nerdiess in *the business*. The a-hole also has retractable intestines, apparently, that can grab like tentacles (in fact, the subject of Mills' next film is tentacle related), but looks like ropes (i.e., too stiff and not membraney enough). Then again, there are some moments that are great, such as when the zombie reaches up through a bed and the hand goes through a (twin's) body, holding up the heart. This looked superb. Similarly, with a very brief moment where a face is ripped in half off the skull. But don't make me go into the whole Energy Beam Welder thingy.

Now, you may be asking yourself, "This is the director of *The Puppet Monster Massacre*, are there any puppets? Well, class, to answer that, let me state that by far, the silliest moment is when Pollux pees (red, so I'm assuming blood) in the woods, and a slew of skeletal creatures come out. In actuality, this are a Halloween skeleton you can buy to put on your lawn. Mills fixed it up with pop-out white eyes and a couple of other thingies, and then just replicated it digitally to make it into multitudes. It looks bad and fakey, though Mills rightfully states in the commentary, "You can't pretend it's *Schindler's List*."

That being said, the other puppet is some kind of chained wizened creature in a small box that turns on with a skeleton key (side-note: in an early scene, Frank drops the key, but has it moments later without bending down... I'm guessing there is a small part deleted there?), that is one of the more imaginative and interesting ideas in the film (and there are some good ones here). Named Selwyn, after the baby in the classic *Dead Alive* (1992), it is superbly voiced by Eugene Flynn.

There are only two extras on the disk, one being the trailer, and the other is a noteworthy commentary by director Dustin Mills and the title character actor, Brandon Salkil. Goofy at times, there is also a lot of information about both the production and the plot that makes it worthwhile.

What happens in the story? Well, suffice it to say the film proves Carol Clover's seminal book, *Men, Women and Chainsaws* (1992) to be correct. Let's leave it at that, other than there is supposedly a sequel down the road that I'm looking forward to watching.

Meanwhile, there is an interesting interview with director Dustin Mills on another site [HERE](#).

Posted by **Robert Barry Francos** at 12:01 AM

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