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"Zombie A-Hole" Offers Amateur-Hour Thrills but A Fertile Imagination Review

by Mark Zhuravsky

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Having never met Dustin Mills, I still think I'm supposed to like him. The writer, director, actor, editor, special effects man and composer of *Zombie A-Hole* is no doubt a fan of Mr. Kevin Smith, a self-promotion wizard. For example, witness Mr. Mills responding to individual fans on *Zombie A-Hole's* Facebook page. With one feature already under his belt (*The Puppet Monster Massacre*), Mills likely subscribes to the shoe-string sets' way of churning out feature after feature hoping for the one that hits big, or sparks a fanbase that sticks around. *Zombie A-Hole* is a valiant effort, full of indiscriminate, copious nudity, gratuitous slow motion, gore, gunfire, and featuring an auto-tuned Southern-tinged rock intro. What more do you want? How about a running time that's not an unconscionable 108 minutes?

Frank Fulci (Josh Eal), a trenchcoat-wearing, gun-toting demon hunter cowboy is on the trail of an undead menace (Brandon Salkil) with a taste for female twins. As the demon claims victim after victim,

Fulci joins forces with the killer's brother Castor (Salkil again) and vengeful survivor Mercy (Jessica Daniels). The trio is soon on the undead a-hole's tail and heading toward a one-way dead-on confrontation that will shake the very foundations of the earth as an undead horde comes to terrifying (and hilariously poorly animated) life.

Mills has inspiration and ambition to spare and his animation work belongs way outside the ghetto of tiny budgeted horror flicks. *Zombie A-Hole* doesn't lack for cool, overblown slow motion and dialogue that oscillates wildly from inspired (a conversation with a tiny enshrined shrunken man offers dialogue that feels like it belongs in a gothic prestige picture) to stale bits of spoon-fed plot. The pacing is what hurts the most, offering scenes that could be excised without losing even a bit of the mood and perhaps even improving the film as it clocks in at 80-90 minutes. Even Rodriguez and Tarantino, working with budgets likely hundreds of times what *Zombie A-Hole* cost, knew to wrap it up under 70 minutes.

DVD Bonus Features

Commentary with Mills provides light banter, while a trailer acts as a sizzle reel without bringing up the lengthy running time. Finally, footage left on the cutting room floor introduces an additional character. All in all, not a cornucopia of features, but a nice addition considering the films very, very humble roots.

Rock on, Mr. Mills. Just don't let your ambition run away with your running time.

"Zombie A-Hole" is on sale August 21, 2012 and is not rated. Fantasy, Horror. Written and directed by Dustin Mills. Starring Brandon Salkil, Jessica Cook, Josh Eal.

Mark Zhuravsky • Staff Writer

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