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Quick Look



"Jesus Christ Vampire Hunter" is not a great film, but it's a piece of cinema that should not be forgotten, either. It dared to be different and very nearly became a bonafide cult classic!

--R. L. Shaffer

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DVD Review

Jesus Christ Vampire Hunter (2002, Blu-ray)

Directors: Lee Demarbre

Producers: Lee Demarbre

Writers: Ian Driscoll

Features: * Featurette * Trailers

Characters:

- Phil Caracas ... Jesus Christ
- Murielle Varhelyi ... Maxine Schreck
- Ian Driscoll ... Johnny Golgotha
- Jeff Moffet ... Santo Enmascarado de Plata
- Josh Grace ... Dr. Pretorious
- Jason McMaster ... Atheist 1
- Johnny Vegas ... Himself
- Graham Collins ... Store Clerk
- Tim Devries ... Father Eustace
- Miles Finlayson ... Atheist
- Ivan Freud ... Narrator
- Mike Funk ... Danny Sabbath
- Alex Godin ... Father Avellino
- Glen Jones ... Father Alban
- Claudia Jurt ... Misty Winters
- Tracy Lance ... Gloria Oddbottom
- Maria Moulton ... Mary Magnum

Genre: Comedy

Review:

Jesus Christ Vampire Hunter Blu-ray Review



A few years ago, the "Jesus Christ Vampire Hunter"-craze swept across college campuses like wildfire. You couldn't go anywhere without discovering a midnight screening of the wicked, poorly shot, hideously dubbed cult film--usually tucked away somewhere on campus, likely held by the local film club, all who sought to expand the film's minimal audience, or insight anger among right-wing Christians who can't take a joke (particularly since the film isn't as brashly sacrilegious and some may think).

For those unaware, "Jesus Christ Vampire Hunter" follows a modern Jesus Christ as he wages war against both Atheists and a clan of lesbian vampires hell-bent on killing anyone that gets in their way. He's paired with Santo, a famous Mexican wrestler and Mary Magnum, a sexy crime fighter with a religious spark. The combination proves immensely hysterical and the dynamic trio jump, punch and kick their way to the film's zesty finale. Adding even more appeal are the film's cheeky musical numbers that punctuate the irreverent sense of humor. Make no mistake, these songs are nowhere near the caliber of something like "Jesus Christ Superstar," but they do add flavor to the film's over-the-top spoof of religion, film and society.

But, like the whirl of a violent storm, the craze that was "Jesus Christ Vampire Hunter" faded away, forgotten even by its once tried and true base of fans. Even the filmmakers themselves had forgotten their inspirational work, sinking deep into the recesses of straight-to-video madness, never to be seen or heard from again.

And that's what makes this new Blu-ray release so exciting. Perhaps once more, fans and newcomers alike can rediscover this hilarious spoof of zany imported chop-socky epics, with a dash of social and religious satire. Looking back, the film really is quite fun, even though it's poorly made and terribly edited. The action is well staged and clever and the story is both original and relevant. The characters are designed to fit clichéd molds that still sting of classy sarcasm and loving homage to this very day. There's rarely a moment where this film doesn't pinch out a laugh or two, if not a full blown chuckle or gut-buster.

"Jesus Christ Vampire Hunter" is not a great film, but it's a piece of cinema that should not be forgotten, either. It dared to be different and very nearly became a bonafide cult classic--recognized by the finest of film scholars. The college campuses may no longer be singing the film's name, but for those who have experienced the "body of Christ," this film will forever be etched in their memory. With some luck, this Blu-ray re-release will spark their undying faith and resurrect this wonderful cult flick from the dead.

Film Report Card:

Entertainment Value: A-

Film Value: C+

Final Grade:

B

HD REVIEW:

Video:

"Jesus Christ Vampire Hunter" is presented on Blu-ray in 1.85:1 widescreen, encoded in 1080p/VC-1 video on a BD25 disc. I was one of the dozen people who owned the original DVD and let me tell you, it's horrible. Full of murky blacks, yellow fleshtones and some of the most visually distracting digital compression issues I've ever seen, the film is barely watchable. That said, compared to the old DVD, this remastered Blu-ray is a significant improvement over the original. Gone are the yucky black levels and yellowy palette. Also gone are the annoying digital compression issues.

Sadly, this is also one of the worst remasters I've ever seen. Immediately noticeable is a hue of milky white that clouds the screen from the very first minute of the film to the finale. Getting the black level right just isn't this company's strong suit. Even nighttime sequences suffer the fate of this murky, drab palette. This, unfortunately, kills the film's image depth and clouds image detail. Dust, grain, film scratches and other blemishes are also annoyingly present, though they help to create a cheap imported chop-socky flair, which adds to the film's allure. Make no mistake, if you love this film, it's worth upgrading. Even with its faults, this is still a vastly superior transfer to the last, but as far as Blu-ray remasters go, this is easily among the worst I've seen.

Audio:

MVD merely ports over the film's stereo track with mixed results. The film is poorly post-dubbed, making the dialogue feel hollow and distorted. It's technically distracting, but it does, like the transfer, add to the allure of the picture. Surround usage is nowhere to be heard and sound effects and score are poorly mixed together. If the filmmakers were intending on this looking and feeling like an old grindhouse picture from the 70s, they succeeded. If not, this is a truly terrible audio dub and a bad mix.

Extras:

Here's where things get a little disappointing. MVD has opted to drop most of the original DVD's special features. The back of the Blu-ray box claims there's an audio commentary, but it's nowhere to be found on the disc. Besides a trailer, only a new documentary, "Remembering JCVH," is found on the disc. What a let down. I wish MVD had gone BD50 with this disc and placed all of the special features from the old DVD release on here.

HD Content:

The above documentary, "Remembering JCVH," is exclusive to this Blu-ray release. It's in SD and runs a short, but sweet 15 minutes. Overall, it's an interesting look at where the cast and crew is now, but it's also a little depressing, mostly because these guys never really rallied together to make something bigger and better.

Packaging:

MVD basically ports over their old DVD design to Blu-ray with only a few changes. Design is classy, but light on tech specs which may leave some consumers confused.

Final Thoughts:

The premise is fairly original and the cast is game for a good, bloody cult musical/vampire epic making "Jesus Christ Vampire Hunter" a fun, but wholly terrible movie. If only these guys could get around to that sequel they mentioned doing (which involved Christ time traveling back in time to stop vampires from stealing his body before his resurrection). The Blu-ray is an improvement over the DVD when it comes to video, but audio remains the same and key special features are missing, though the new documentary is compelling. Still, if you like this movie, this disc is well worth owning.

Blu-ray Report Card:

Video: C-

Audio: C-

Extras: N/A

HD Content: D+

Packaging: C+

Recommendation: Fans should buy this disc. Others should rent with caution.

On Blu-ray: October 28, 2008.

Enjoy the trailer for "Jesus Christ Vampire Hunter" --



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...473...

---R. L. Shaffer

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