



THE GORE MET

MENU: A TASTE FOR GANG VIOLENCE



Found-footage films are relatively inexpensive to produce and, as *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), *Paranormal Activity* (2007) and *Cloverfield* (2008) proved, can be financially lucrative. Beyond the multiplex, found-footage films are abundant in the underground horror scene, from *Welcome to the Jungle* (2007) and *Long Pigs* (2007) to *August Underground* (2001) and *Snuff 102* (2007). *Man Bites Dog* (1992) is generally considered the first bona fide found-footage horror film, but there was an earlier example made the year before (though released the year after) that through poor distribution had been lost to the mists of time. Camp Motion Pictures, in conjunction with *Lunchmeat* VHS fan magazine editor Josh Schaefer, have resurrected Jack Perez's *America's Deadliest Home Video* (1993). Horror history is being rewritten! At least by me...

Then-tabloid badboy and former *Partridge Family* star Danny Bonaduce stars as amiable schlub Dougie, an overzealous home video enthusiast obsessed with documenting his life on Hi-8 tape. When Dougie – and his camera – catch his wife having sex with another man, he abandons his marriage for the open highway and documents his cross-country journey in a roadside video journal. While at a disused rock quarry relating a droll anecdote about his father, he inadvertently records a trio of petty criminals pushing a stolen car into the yawning chasm behind him. Instead of killing him, the Bonnie and Clyde-inspired crooks – Clint Dryer (Mick Wynhoff), his moll Gloria (Melora Walters) and trigger-happy henchwoman Vezna (Mollena Williams) – take Dougie hostage to videotape their suburban crime spree. Dougie transforms from captive to reluctant participant in their rolling wave of convenience store robberies and wanton violence.

Made in 1991 for the \$7000 producer Wynhoff was able to put on his credit card, *America's Deadliest Home Video* was designed to cash-in on



America's Deadliest Home Video

the then-popular direct-to-video rental market. Wynhoff partnered with Perez, who also wrote the script, to get a shot-on-video feature out and kick-start their movie careers. Perez considered the limitations of the format and carefully crafted a film that plays best to consumer-grade video equipment. The entire movie is shown from the perspective of Dougie's camera, so in order to maintain a veneer of reality, there is one angle and one take, with the camera turned on and off between each scene. Long bits, like the time capsule-moment video store robbery, play out in real time. Amongst this is a bunch of gunshot gore effects done on the fly, including a particularly gruesome face blast accomplished with twin actors!

A botched VHS release two years later resulted in about a hundred tapes making it out into the wild; the film never attracted the attention it deserved. However low budget, it's solid work with strong performances that benefits from a strict adherence to the inherent conceit. Camp Motion Pictures gives it just visual due on a DVD that includes individual commentary tracks with Perez and Wynhoff, the official trailer and a whack of trailers for other Camp Video releases. **Highly recommended** to all SOV and VHS fans!

Crime, specifically the act of murder, also plays a significant role in Kurtis Spieler's low-budget

lycanthrope slow-burner *Sheep Skin* (2013), out now from gloriously revived Unearthed Films.

Todd (Laurence Mullaney) is a horny businessman who's drugged and kidnapped at the end of his workday by a quartet of pig-mask-wearing assailants. He's taken to an anonymous warehouse to be interrogated about his involvement in the savage murder of the sister of the gang's leader, Schaefer (Michael Schantz). Schaefer is convinced that Todd is also responsible for the death of another woman, and is a werewolf. Facing six silver bullets, vicious beatings and a lust for revenge, Todd is given until the full moon rises to confess any hirsute misdeeds he may be responsible for.

While there are moments that are clumsy and drawn out in order to maintain the mostly one-room conceit of this film, it's an otherwise sharp potboiler that culminates in a satisfyingly violent and twist-riddled climax (that includes gags in the end credits, so watch them through). The small but strong cast is up to the challenge of the claustrophobic setting, there is some cool gore, and punk is well-used in the soundtrack. Other than that, there are both colour and

black and white versions and a pile of worthy extras on the DVD. But watch 'em after, as you want to venture onto this particular moor frighteningly unprepared. 🐾

