

“SOMEONE’S KNOCKING AT THE DOOR” (DVD Review)

Written by Michael Gingold
Tuesday, 01 June 2010 15:53



“Don’t make it look like PULSE” was the mission statement behind *SOMEONE’S KNOCKING AT THE DOOR*, according to actor/producer Noah Segan on Vicious Circle’s new DVD. And they certainly succeeded at that; *KNOCKING* has nothing in common with either Kiyoshi Kurosawa’s brooding supernatural drama or the terrible U.S. remake, though it does echo certain recent, more outrageous J-horror entries in its scenes of grotesquely distended genitalia.

Director/co-writer Chad Ferrin also eschews the standards of the youth-horror genre, opting instead for something more hallucinatory. (He reveals on the disc that he rewrote what was originally a more standard slasher script, by executive producer Roham Ghodsi and Rosie Roberts.) The movie, er, opens bluntly with the fatal anal rape of med student Ray (Jordan Lawson), whose oddly violated body particularly piques the curiosity of a couple of investigating detectives. As they investigate and interrogate Ray’s circle of friends, we learn that the youths had sneaked down to a basement file room to read up on John and Wilma Hopper, a pair of deviant serial killers from the ’70s. Oh yeah, and to do some pretty hard drugs, specifically an experimental substance called Taldon.



Unfortunately, one of the drug’s apparent side effects is to allow the Hoppers entry into the students’ present, and conventional weapons won’t suffice for these two. Instead, they wield sexual organs of death against the group, whose realities start altering in other strange ways as well. Ferrin, whose previous movies include the above-average underground shocker *THE GHOULS* and who is establishing himself as one of our most interesting independent auteurs, uses odd, off-kilter sights—involving both Niklas Larsson’s cinematography and Tom Devlin’s makeup FX—in tandem with Steven Hitzelberger’s quite arresting sound design and Brad Joseph Breeck and The Mae Shi’s musical contributions to keep viewers as off-balance as the characters, portrayed by a troupe who clearly had no qualms about helping Ferrin realize his no-holds-barred vision. (Actually, the disc’s pair of audio commentaries reveal that one actress did demur when it came to nudity, but her co-stars had no such compunctions.)

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As Justin, the most zealous explorer of altered consciousness who’s eventually forced to acknowledge the consequences, Segan—who’s making a specialty of horror-film hedonists with this role and DEADGIRL—anchors a cast who vividly enact their nicely delineated roles, most notably Jon Budinoff as Sebastian, the story’s figurative grade-A prick. Essaying that role literally is THE HILLS HAVE EYES’ Buzzington, tackling his villainous role with gusto and demonstrating a palpable, perverse glee as he charges after his victims with his oversized dong of death. The movie occasionally gets a little too crazy, or tries to be too clever, for its own good, and there may be a groan or two out there when the plot arrives at its resolution. Overall, though, SOMEONE’S KNOCKING AT THE DOOR possesses the combination of adventurous spirit and filmmaking chops that should characterize independent horror cinema, and too infrequently does.

As extreme as its violence, sex and combinations thereof become, the supplements reveal that they could have been even worse: We hear about, and see the filming of, a makeup effect in which...well, let’s just say that a lot of milk is involved, but it’s not supposed to *be* milk. The pair of commentaries team Ferrin with Segan and co-star Timothy Muskatell, respectively, and they’re both loose and casual. The track with Segan, also a producer on SOMEONE’S KNOCKING, goes a little more in-depth on creative issues, while longtime collaborators Ferrin and Muskatell dish a little more dirt—dissing and talking trash about a couple of actors, recalling how Ghodsi and his fellow Australian backers stiffed the guy whose apartment they crashed in during the LA shoot and calling out Troma’s Lloyd Kaufman for not paying up after releasing the duo’s first feature, UNSPEAKABLE. The director states on this track that he was going for a “Technicolor feel” distinct from the usual monochromes that are rampant on the indie genre scene, and while the disc’s 2.35:1 image isn’t quite that vibrant, it still bears a good, crisp look, and the 5.1 sound is properly edgy and aggressive.

Ferrin and Muskatell devote a certain portion of their talk to all the boobs and schlongs—real and prosthetically enhanced—on display, and those who want to see even more should check out the four minutes of deleted scenes. The other extras—navigated via scene-excerpt menus that run a little too long—include a collection of behind-the-scenes video that could also use a little judicious trimming, but does offer good coverage of the FX creation, and amusingly matter-of-fact discussions of a few of the yuckier moments. A *faux* vintage “Taldon Drug Test Subject” film excerpted in SOMEONE’S KNOCKING is presented in its entirety, and those who want tastes of the director and star’s other work can check out trailers for Ferrin’s other features and a Segan-helmed music video, which applies macabre visuals to Andrew Lynch’s benign-sounding song “Say It.” (If you’re in the Burbank, CA area and want to get a signed copy of the SOMEONE’S KNOCKING DVD, head over to Dark Delicacies at 3512 West Magnolia Boulevard this Saturday, June 5 at 2 p.m., when Ferrin, Muskatell, Segan, Buzzington and co-stars Vernon Wells, Lew Temple and Joe Pilato will all be autographing copies. Ferrin and Muskatell will be putting their John Hancocks on DVDs of EASTER BUNNY, KILL! KILL!—out

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today from Vicious Circle—as well.)

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