

Fango Flashback: "BLOOD FREAK" (1972)

Written by Caryn Coleman

Monday, 12 November 2012 10:34



Although many films in the 1970s dealt with the horror of the Vietnam War and the affected soldiers' difficult return to "normal" life in the United States (LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT, DEATHDREAM, TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE), BLOOD FREAK ([playing tonight at Nitehawk Cinema's VHS Vault!](#)) certainly isn't one of them.

Vietnam vet / motorcycle rider Herschell certainly has some demons in his closet but this movie doesn't really take us there with him. Providing a ludicrous quasi-morality tale on consumption (drugs, the bible, turkey, women), BLOOD FREAK is not exceptionally gory or gratuitous or even offensive. It is, however, horribly produced, horrendously acted, and has appalling dialogue. Yet still (still!), BLOOD FREAK is so damn entertaining that to revel in its kitsch should be a horror fan's inalienable right. There is some indefinable quality here that makes this tale, one of a muscle-man-turned-drug-addicted-killer-turkey-man, one for the ages.

BLOOD FREAK pits religious beliefs against the swinging hippy lifestyle, making the lines between propaganda and horror a little blurry. Things kick off for Herschell when he meets Bible-loving Angel on the side of the Florida turnpike. He follows her to the druggie-filled "far out" home of her sister, Anne, who immediately falls for the Elvis (or Danzig) look-alike. After a brief resistance, he succumbs to Anne's peer pressure and starts smoking some delicious drugs. Unfortunately, these street drugs are the least of Herschell's problems. His consumption of experimental turkey meat as a side-job at the "turkey farm" and his subsequent freak-out that turns him into a man-turkey who kills junkies is quite the visceral evocation of the brutality of eating meat and vivisection.

{youtube}xVJDDK05f0I{/youtube}

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Shockingly, the most entertaining part of BLOOD FREAK isn't Herschell as the killer turkey or his laughable murderous rampage. It's the interspersed commentary by co-director Brad F. Grinter in which he breaks the fourth wall by speaking, or rather reading, directly to the audience. Furiously chain-smoking, he verbalizes the actions of the main character and expressing what the audience is seeing unfold; he's our Greek Chorus. But while in Greek plays, this person (or persons) is traditionally objective, Grinter offers up a pseudo-philosophical context in which we are to view BLOOD FREAK. Ironically, his last commentary ends in a smoke induced coughing fit while he lectures on the perils of being unaware of what we consume into our bodies.

Of course, there's a twist towards the end of this film, but I wouldn't want to ruin all the fun. And, really, no words could ever do it justice. BLOOD FREAK may not be the definition of good bad taste, but the after-taste isn't completely unsavory. Enjoy and be safe this Thanksgiving.