

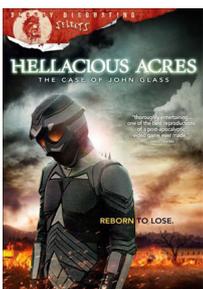
“HELLACIOUS ACRES: THE CASE OF JOHN GLASS” (DVD Review)

Written by Mister Smith
Friday, 04 May 2012 11:33



The American poet Howard Nemerov had his own take on the age-old saying “Write what you know”; he said, “Write what you know. That should leave you with a lot of free time.” After viewing HELLACIOUS ACRES: THE CASE OF JOHN GLASS, I’m inclined to think that writer/director Pat Tremblay took Nemerov’s advice to heart.

The setting of HELLACIOUS ACRES (on DVD from Vivendi) is what is presumed to be the near future. After waking up in a crate in the middle of nowhere, our costumed protagonist, John Glass, is brought up to speed by a prerecorded message transmitted through his helmet. Though he has no recollection of anything before his awakening, he is quickly briefed that an “alien world war” has left the Earth almost uninhabitable for human beings. The air is so toxic that he must remain encapsulated head to toe in a survival suit, while the possibility of finding any food is unlikely. If this isn’t enough, Glass still has to worry about the floating alien lifeforms that randomly appear to finish off the remaining survivors.



Despite the tough surroundings and grim outlook, Glass has a reason to drive forward. As a soldier, he has been given the objective to find and report the “toxic gas level meters” in his sector. Once the levels have been recorded, he must then locate the fusion headquarters, where he is to utilize the meter reading to restore part of the atmosphere.

After the quick setup, the film then devolves into a slow and sometimes pointless adventure across miles and miles of open countryside. Occasionally, the viewer is treated to excitement in

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small doses: Finding food and the obstacle of eating it without removing his mask, for example, becomes a mission in itself. When our protagonist does come across another human being, physical confrontation is not too far behind. Between these few moments of action, however, is a lot of walking. “A lot” as in, a lot. The majority of the running time is spent on Glass traveling on foot from point to point, as he records his own thoughts on this broken world.

It feels like a premise pulled from a video game, especially since our hero wears a suit designed to look like something in between a Pro BMX rider and a Power Ranger. Using an old-school Nintendo-esque “power glove,” Glass can retrieve GPS navigation and current health stats, or if he doesn’t have an answer to something, he can utilize the field reference or mission menu.

Glass’ biggest enemy is not the aliens, but the editing—or lack thereof. HELLACIOUS ACRES clocks in at a brutal 108 minutes, and it’s illogical why the film is as long as it is. The DVD extras consist solely of deleted scenes, and one can make a strong argument that this bonus feature should be half as long as the movie itself.

HELLACIOUS ACRES is not an inept movie, but nor is it an exciting one. Tremblay set himself a daunting task when he decided to make a movie about a loner who roams the land talking to himself underneath a mask. It’s certainly a different concept from anything one is likely to have seen recently, so kudos should be given to Tremblay for sticking with it and adding as much style as he probably could. Tremblay was clearly committed to his idea, having produced, written, edited and photographed the movie, and if one didn’t know any better, one would think he’s a serious videogamer who decided to adapt some of his favorite game elements into a movie. However, there’s just not enough material here to justify a feature film. Though he does show a lot of creativity on what must have been an incredibly restricted budget (and possibly an even tighter shooting schedule), this reviewer would like to see what he could do with a more astute editor, or more money injected into the production values.

The citing of the Nemerov quote above isn’t a jab at the filmmakers’ wit, but rather at the execution of the story. It seems that John Glass doesn’t know much more about where his adventure is going than the filmmakers do themselves. As Nemerov suggested, both the protagonist and screenwriter do, in fact, have plenty of free time on their hands.

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