

“CORNERED!” (DVD Review)

Written by Samuel Zimmerman
Tuesday, 01 June 2010 15:49



The first thing you need to know about CORNERED! is that Steve Guttenberg is in it. Good or bad, original or bland, funny or not—that’ll sort itself out later, but since you probably haven’t seen the Goot in anything in a long time, and now his curly head of hair is back in this horror/comedy, you’ll probably want to see it...at least, that was my thought process when presented with Phase 4’s new DVD.

CORNERED!, a low-budget feature that, if anything, is funnier than it is frightening, is actually a small delight in and of itself, beyond seeing our favorite THREE MEN AND A BABY star again. Set during the rampage of a serial killer who strikes in creative and brutal ways at urban delis (nabbing the surveillance tapes afterward), the film takes place over one night as a convenience store owner (Eduardo Antonio Garcia) and a small group of his friends, regulars and employees set up shop in his apartment atop the shop for their weekly poker game. Soon enough, players are turning into corpses, and the gang is horrified to learn that when lovable chub Donny (Peter Story) fixed the front door earlier in the night, he actually locked them all in.



The strong suit of CORNERED! is its colorful characters and the actors portraying them (never thought I’d say that about a movie featuring James Duval). Each has his or her own lowlife quirk, and the actors play them to the hilt, creating a fun and funny ensemble who you may not go so far as to care about (they are kind of lowlifes, after all), but will definitely keep you entertained. Duval actually does great work as Steve, the owner’s nephew who is going through cold-turkey heroin withdrawal. As the film progresses, Duval truly sells the dirty, sweaty and sickening hell he’s in (albeit often for laughs), especially a fun tangent involving his fear of hallucinatory roaches. Guttenberg, who doesn’t exactly have a lot of screen time and never really gets past the concept of “Steve Guttenberg playing an average delivery guy,” is still a lot of fun to watch, especially when he reappears later in the film.

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Daniel Maze’s direction of Darrin Grimwood’s script also rises above standard low-budget/direct-to-DVD horror. Maze stages smile- and cringe-inducingly elaborate deaths involving a host of convenience-store stalwarts (a deli slicer, Saran Wrap and an ice cream freezer). One particular kill, involving a butcher’s knife in the neck and how it’s presented and filmed, serves as evidence that Maze just might go places after this. The atmosphere is spot-on as well: This store, on a corner in an obviously bad neighborhood in an incredibly hot climate, is dripping with grime and sweat. Keith Dunkerley’s cinematography, rife with muted desert colors by day and rusty hues at night, kind of makes you feel gross just watching the DVD’s anamorphic widescreen transfer.

The writing doesn’t always click, as the dialogue is a bit silly and crude at points (it’s the actors who sell that aspect) but the killer’s main conceit (MINOR SPOILER: the murderer is slaying the victims in the ways each said they would kill him/her if given the chance), is an original idea, and definitely fits the movie’s over-the-top nature. CORNERED! also does a nice job with a bit of role reversal: The whiny and easily scared asthmatic Donny, who seems to be set up as the romantic hero, since he’s very much in love with good-hearted hooker Jess (Elizabeth Nicole), often winds up protected by her own proactiveness and bravery, as he cowers and doesn’t do much to help.

The disc’s sole accompanying supplement is a very standard behind-the-scenes segment that features *a lot* of Guttenberg praising his lesser-known colleagues, so if you decide to skip it, you won’t miss much. As a fun horror/comedy, CORNERED! works, and with a little word-of-mouth should garner a nice little following, and it’s a shame that the viewers who will enjoy it don’t get a lot of extras to sink their teeth into.

MOVIE: 🍷🍷🍷👤

DVD PACKAGE: 🍷🍷🍷👤

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