

## “BLOOD ON THE HIGHWAY” (DVD Review)

Written by Samuel Zimmerman  
Tuesday, 29 June 2010 10:09

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The back of BLOOD ON THE HIGHWAY's DVD case attributes these words to FANGORIA: “A Texas vampire opus.” Seeing as how Fango has never previously reviewed the movie (now out from E1 Entertainment), one must assume the description came from some sort of announcement or news item about it. The lesson: when filmmakers or distributors are snatching quotes that do nothing to denote the quality or entertainment value of their “opus,” it's often a bad sign—or, in this case, a terrible, terrible one.

BLOOD ON THE HIGHWAY can loosely be dubbed a horror/comedy. It's the epic (boring and unfunny) tale of young lovers Sam and Carrie and Sam's angry (hates his father, natch), rebellious (wearing a wife beater and stone face) best friend, Bone. Together they set off on a sprawling (they get about 50 miles) road trip through the American landscape (Texas) with the ultimate (highly original) destination of a weekend-long music festival. Instead, they come across the town of Fate and a conglomerate of vampires trying to turn the nation into bloodsuckers via capitalism and a supermarket chain...



“Wait a minute,” you say. “Business-owning monsters that suck the blood and energy of their customers, in turn creating more blood- and energy-consuming monsters? That sounds slightly intelligent and satirical.” It would be, if these ideas were ever truly addressed. In fact, they are so under-represented in the film that it feels like writers Blair Rowan (who also directed with Barak Epstein) and Chris Gardner chose the setup by pure coincidence.

The action instead focuses on wimpy young Sam (Nate Rubin) and his tumultuous relationship with a girlfriend (Robin Gierhart) who walks all over him in addition to being clearly attracted to the best friend (Deva George) who treats him like shit. But don't worry, everything is played for laughs, so they shouldn't be thought of as the pure human trash they are. After Sam is bitten in

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a gas-station convenience store, the three happen upon Byron (Tony Medlin), a self-proclaimed “survivalist who survives and is interested in surviving.” Byron invites the protagonists to his home, which doubles as his own manmade independent nation, dubbed House-achussetts. House-achussetts’ population also consists of Byron’s repulsive wannabe-sexpot of a wife, Lynette (Laura Stone) and his equally repulsive sleazeball frat-boy friend Roy (Gardner, who spends much of the film in briefs, a blazer and a baseball cap that reads “Snatch Hound”). As Sam transforms, they take turns deciding how they’ll face the growing population of vampires outside and throwing out crude, unhilarious one-liners. Here’s a taste of the incredible wit on display:

“Let’s see, they had fangs, that one didn’t give a f\*\*k when I tore his arm off and they both died pretty f\*\*kin’ quickly when I put a stake through their heart. So obviously, they’re Lutherans.”

“Anyone ever tell you you’re beautiful when you’re bereaving the potential death of an obnoxious boyfriend? ...You’re pretty, jiggy, when you sob. Your tits, I mean.”

Late in the film come two cameos that just scream, “I was here for a day and got a check,” by HENRY’s Tom Towles and BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER’s Nicholas Brendon. Towles most definitely deserves better, and just by association with the aforementioned modern-classic of a TV show, so does Brendon. But sadly, neither of them do this film any favors.

None of the characters have anything going on beyond their surface characteristics, and none of the actors play anything besides broad and over-the-top, which is probably the fault of directors Rowan and Epstein. What evidently happened here is another case of young filmmakers trying to emulate the flicks they loved so much growing up, without realizing that many of the directors they idolize weren’t trying to make silly B-movies. That failure to understand results in a movie populated with bad actors, bland comedy and an unimmersive story. It’s the type of film that you see and say to yourself, “I’ll bet I know exactly what kind of dudes made this and thought it was awesome.” And then you listen to the DVD’s commentary and find out you were right.

This track features a host of BLOOD ON THE HIGHWAY’s cast and crew and is, simply put, a challenge to listen to. Most of the participants forget the purpose of their presence, with everyone talking loudly over each other and creating a wholly nonsensical listening experience. The one bit that comes through loud and clear, funny enough, is when one of the writers, discussing a question many audience members have after viewing the movie, reveals, “We

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didn't think about that when we were writing it.”

The other main extra, a behind-the-scenes documentary, is comparable to many other standard-issue featurettes, which means you won't miss much by skipping it—except for another telling revelation. Rowan and Gardner explain that the script began life, and much of it was written, in their adolescence. Aha! It all becomes clear...

MOVIE: 📺👤👤👤

DVD PACKAGE: 📺👤👤👤

{jcomments on}