

“GEORGE: A ZOMBIE INTERVENTION” (DVD Review)

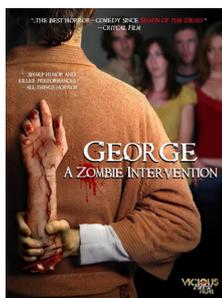
Written by Jeremy Webster

Wednesday, 26 October 2011 12:11



In director/co-writer J.T. Seaton's feature debut *GEORGE: A ZOMBIE INTERVENTION*, friends and family gather to plan out and stage an intervention for the eponymous undead fellow. His addiction: eating people. In your typical Romero-esque zombie flick, the very notion of having such an intervention would be absurd, since those living dead hardly qualify as intelligent. But Seaton and writing partner Brad Hodson are clever guys, and the film lurking on Vicious Circle/Breaking Glass Pictures' DVD is far smarter than the title would lead you to suspect.

Seaton and Hodson have their own twist on zombie biology (or necrology, if you prefer): They're still undead and they still have the urge to consume humans, but they're essentially reanimated by alien spores that live in the lungs and activate upon death. A Cold War-inspired opening slideshow tells us that zombies are basically the same people they were in life; they just have a "slight" urge to eat people. Well, not all zombies. Some are the typical relentless, vicious, mostly brainless type you're used to. But most are just regular folks who are just trying to get on with their lives...er, I mean, deaths. Hrm. Afterlives? Yeah, afterlives, that works.



The intervention party consists of George's best friend Ben (Peter Stickles), his overly protective sister Francine (Shannon Hodson), his ex-girlfriend Sarah (Michelle Tomlinson), and Sarah's ultra-aggressive, ultra-insensitive new boyfriend Steve (Eric Dean). They've hired "professional interventionist" Barbra (genre and cult film stalwart Lynn Lowry) to mediate, despite increasing evidence that she's an unorganized, scatterbrained dingbat, and together they head over to George's house to have their little "visit." A late-arriving friend, the charming, perpetually drunk Roger (Vincent Cusimano), mistakes the whole thing for a birthday party and spends a great amount of the film with no clue as to what's really going on. George himself

“GEORGE: A ZOMBIE INTERVENTION” (DVD Review)

Written by Jeremy Webster

Wednesday, 26 October 2011 12:11

(Carlos Larkin) is suspicious from the get-go and finds the whole thing infuriating. After an unproductive first go-round, the group goes on break, and as they start to relax and do their own thing for a bit, both they and a series of visitors find themselves unknowingly in danger of becoming a snack buffet.

Low-budget “zom-coms” are, of course, nothing new on the independent horror scene, many of them sticking mainly to Troma-esque “splatstick” humor. GEORGE has its share of grue and glop—and the grue and glop here, supplied by Tom Devlin and 1313FX, are very well-done—but the real highlights are the movie’s sharp character writing and excellent cast. Hodson and Seaton keep up a steady stream of clever, quirky interplay and general situational absurdity that keep the film brisk, funny and fresh. Their script is excellently realized by an extremely talented cast, with rarely a bum note onscreen. Lowry’s turn as the dingy interventionist is particularly fun, and Larkin is marvelous as George, who’s basically a sort of zombie equivalent of THE BIG LEBOWSKI’s Dude: an undead guy who just wants to relax, watch some snuffish reality TV and maybe snack on some literal finger food, who’s suddenly confronted with a whole lot of non-abiding nonsense courtesy of his friends and family.

The film’s only real weakness in this light is the early portrayal of the jerky Steve, whose overbearing, dominant alpha-male schtick is at first gratingly stereotypical, and viewers will have a hard time believing this vacuous, ego-driven loudmouth would ever be appealing to Sarah. Still, this isn’t the fault of actor Dean, who nails the role with pitch-perfect schmuckiness, and the character’s use and portrayal later in the film, after he’s gone through a series of unfortunate situations, is far less grating.

For all the fine work Hodson and Seaton pulled off writing these mostly excellent characterizations, they could have applied more attention to detail in the chronology of the overall script. Once the gang goes into break period and splits into smaller groups, the film has to switch between the various perspectives to tell its tale. One character leaves the group to make a phone call. After a couple of scenes, we return to that group, who decide to go looking for the person who left them earlier. We get a few more scenes, than those characters turn up again. We’re not led to believe George has a large house, so the amount of time they’ve been searching seems disproportionate to the elapsed time in the plot, and it also seems unlikely that they were able to traverse the house without somehow noticing some of the weird things going on in other rooms.

There are a few of these odd sorts of relational plot holes in the film, but while they’ll perhaps be momentarily distracting for a viewer who picks up on them, they’re likely a simple-enough first-feature issue for these filmmakers, and they pass without coming close to ruining the film

“GEORGE: A ZOMBIE INTERVENTION” (DVD Review)

Written by Jeremy Webster

Wednesday, 26 October 2011 12:11

as a whole. This is an impressive debut effort, particularly for a low-budget indie. The direction, the dialogue and the acting are all excellent overall, and if you were to take away most of the gore, GEORGE would still stand as a quality film.

Vicious Circle has filled out this DVD with an impressive amount of extras that range from the awesome to the eccentric, including the original ending; a behind-the-scenes sequence edited from a reshoot session for one of the climactic sequences; a near half-hour (!) of outtakes from Lloyd Kaufman’s cameo that Troma and Kaufman’s fans will likely enjoy; an 11-minute “Zombie Group Therapy” video that’s worth a few smiles; a short film called “Sunday on the Set With George” that’s a brief, somewhat psychedelic vignette concerning the relationship of a gay couple who were actors in the film (I think); plus a photo gallery and trailers for this and other Breaking Glass titles.

The disc also features two commentary tracks—one by Seaton and Hodson that’s a good mix of informative and funny, and a second with the cast minus Lowry that’s more or less a goofy, silly party sort of experience. They even let us know at one point that the pizza guy’s there dropping off his wares! Lowry’s absence is, of course, a slight downer, but given the off-the-cuff nature of the track, it’s not likely her presence would have made a huge difference overall. Those who appreciate this film will find a lot to enjoy amidst these special features.

GEORGE: A ZOMBIE INTERVENTION isn’t just an excellent, entertaining zombie comedy—it’s an excellent, entertaining film, period. The direction, performances and FX transcend the obviously modest budget to deliver a film that was made with the realization that the absurdity of well-written human interaction is just as effective as the absurdity of a splattering zombie head shot.

MOVIE: 🍅🍅🍅🍅

DVD PACKAGE: 🍅🍅🍅🍅