

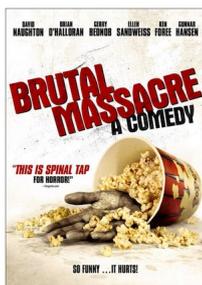
Fresh from the Archives: "BRUTAL MASSACRE" (Film Review)

Written by Robert Galluzzo
Friday, 18 March 2011 13:32



Stevan Mena's *BEREAVEMENT* is in theaters now. It's the writer/director's third movie and a sequel to his debut feature *MALEVOLENCE*. In between those films, Mena made *BRUTAL MASSACRE*. Here's Robert Galluzzo's review...

I have a huge amount of respect and admiration for what writer/director Stevan Mena was able to accomplish on a modest budget with his genre debut *MALEVOLENCE*. Naturally, I was intrigued by how he would follow up his successful slasher effort, and it came as somewhat of a surprise that Mena chose to make his sophomore flick a comedy. But from the title *BRUTAL MASSACRE*, it's obvious that the film's content is definitely not too far removed from where he got his start.



BRUTAL MASSACRE is the story of horror director Harry Penderecki (*AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON*'s David Naughton), a once-successful filmmaker responsible for a string of genre hits back in the '80s, such as *SASQUATCH AT THE MALL*, *PEOPLE PESTICIDE* and the cult classic *I'LL TAKE THE RING BACK AND THE FINGER TOO* (all of which Penderecki credits as being "influenced by The Beatles' *ABBEY ROAD* album"). The film opens with Penderecki making a rare appearance at a Fango Weekend of Horrors convention, on a filmmaker panel beside fellow director Mick Garris. (Fango's own Tony Timpone cameos as well!) Here, Penderecki defends his work from a reporter's accusations of "being too violent" by claiming that the films are nothing more than reflections of the society he sees around him.

"Then what exactly inspired your movie *BOWEL MOVEMENT*?"

And with that, we're brought into the wacky world of the eccentric Harry and his equally oddball (yet devoted) crew as they gear up to make what is sure to be his comeback film, *BRUTAL MASSACRE*. From the early meetings with potential financial investors to the actual production itself, reporter Bert Campbell (Vincent Butta) is on hand to document the return (or failure) of

Fresh from the Archives: "BRUTAL MASSACRE" (Film Review)

Written by Robert Galluzzo
Friday, 18 March 2011 13:32

one of horror's forgotten auteurs—a clever device to present the entire scenario in mockumentary format.

Among his crew is assistant director Jay Daly (CLERKS star Brian O'Halloran), who has been with Penderecki since his failed pilot for the children's TV show KILLER KOALA. Hanu (Gerry Bednob of THE 40 YEAR-OLD VIRGIN) is his devoted cinematographer, while Carl (played by genre vet Ken Foree) is Harry's longtime grip, who only wants to finish up this last picture so he can finally go back to school to learn computers. Plenty of other recognizable genre faces pop up over the duration of the film, including THE EVIL DEAD's Ellen Sandweiss as Harry's faithful, longtime assistant Natalie and her fellow EVIL DEAD ladies Betsy Baker and Theresa Tilly in cameo roles.



Mena casts everyone against type here, and that only helps to enhance the comedic elements. For example, original Leatherface Gunnar Hansen plays the burly former Vietnam vet Krenshaw, and is hilarious every time he appears on screen; Hansen really deserves to do more comedies. Krenshaw provides the film crew with his old house to front as the killer's abode—since he plans to “tear the f**ker down anyways” and rebuild it—and the place later plays a major role in the completion of the shoot at BRUTAL MASSACRE's conclusion. But before that, every possible disastrous mishap that could occur on a production happens to Harry and his team during the course of the troubled shoot, right down to a PA stealing a reel of film and holding it for ransom to get paid for his one day of work!

All these incidents, paired with the wonderful performances, make for a highly entertaining experience. Harry is a genuinely funny protagonist, in no small part because Naughton plays him not over the top, but rather completely straight. One has to wonder if the character is an amalgamation of directors Naughton has worked with in the past or simply a creation of his and Mena's. Either way, the film gains additional strength from the portrayals of the eclectic supporting characters surrounding Penderecki, with Hansen as well as Bednob in particular stealing the show and garnering up some of the biggest laughs. The only real criticism lies with

Fresh from the Archives: "BRUTAL MASSACRE" (Film Review)

Written by Robert Galluzzo
Friday, 18 March 2011 13:32

the third act, when BRUTAL MASSACRE slows down as Harry hits a personal crisis and tries to determine if his film is even worth finishing. Considering that the version being reviewed is the first festival cut of BRUTAL MASSACRE, it's possible that a little tweaking can perfect the movie's pace, which is otherwise perfect.

I really enjoyed the hell out of BRUTAL MASSACRE. It truly is a THIS IS SPINAL TAP for horror filmmakers, and can be considered a hilarious gift to genre fans. However, that might potentially be a pitfall: Will the movie play as funny to an audience that is not intimate with either horror films or independent filmmaking in general? On the other hand, one could ask the same question regarding non-musicians who sit through SPINAL TAP. Funny is funny no matter who the audience is, and BRUTAL MASSACRE is indeed a funny movie.



{jcomments on}