

“RIGAMORTIS: A ZOMBIE LOVE STORY” (Short Film Review)

Written by Jack Bennett

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RIGAMORTIS: A ZOMBIE LOVE STORY is a tongue-in-cheek musical romance set against the backdrop of a standard Romero-inspired zombie outbreak, and it's...cute. It's not really for hardcore horror fans, and anyone with an aversion to song numbers is going to despise it, but if winking sendups of relentlessly upbeat GLEE-esque revues are your thing, there will be much for you to like here. Like, but probably not love.

A fine effort from some obviously talented people who overcame little to no production value to achieve a well-shot, well-produced short, RIGAMORTIS has won awards at the 2011 Cedar Rapids Independent Film Festival and both the 2011 and 2012 Phoenix Comicons. It screened successfully at Dragon*Con and other genre-friendly venues and probably works well with a crowd, yet it still comes up short of inspired; the best moments mine well-worn ground from other zombie spoofs, and the music and lyrics are passably clever without ever being infectious.



At least it doesn't wear out its welcome. At 36 minutes, RIGAMORTIS swoops in, does its thing and ends before you can get completely sick of it. The story follows two young, attractive zombies, Parker (Maxwell Glick) and Zoey (Lisa Musser), who may be the last of their kind. Eventually, their mutual infatuation puts them in the line of fire of Zoey's still-living ex Brock (Boston Stergis), a ghoul-killer who would be the hero of any other movie, but is recontextualized by this one's perspective into the role of conflicted villain.

The pacing is brisk and the cast is game, with Stergis especially charismatic as the meathead Brock. The character suggests John Nada from THEY LIVE if his laconic moments were replaced with pulsing song numbers belted out in a rock-tinged baritone. It's a humorous take on the rugged, shotgun-wielding survivor type, and the movie's single best conceit (the

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funniest song lionizes Brock’s exploits, including dubious boasts about wrestling a bear and a tornado). Glick and Musser are good as the ingenues, but are never convincing as zombies in either their makeup or performances. The choice to make the zombies speak and act normally, reminiscent of AAAH! ZOMBIES!!, just distances the story further from its chosen subject. It’s a general issue with the movie, which is ultimately a paint-by-numbers musical with the undead inserted.

There is still potential on display from all those involved, from the cast to directors Ted Campbell and Dave Dewes, the latter also responsible for the lyrics with composer Greg Szydlowski. The scenes are well-staged and technically proficient, and the material would probably work like gangbusters on stage. As a movie, it’s a little half-baked, with only one real surprise in the entirety of its short runtime, but small efforts such as these can be charming if they catch you in the right mood. RIGAMORTIS: A ZOMBIE LOVE STORY is available for download on iTunes and from the [official website](#) .

