NOTE: An early draft of this review was accidentally published this morning. I apologize for the mix up!

ASTRON-6 deliver real exploitation film shocks and laughs with FATHER'S DAY; late to the grindhouse fad game but it shows everybody else how it's done. Not since Jason Eisener's HOBO WITH A SHOTGUN have we seen the genre played so well and so true to its lurid, seedy roots.

HOBO was one of the most successful of the neo-grindhouse movies, at least from an artistic perspective. The comedy was extremely dark and the script was written to be played straight, no winking, no nodding at the audience and not a lot of sincerely comic moments between its characters; that wasn't the tone of the movie.

FATHER'S DAY does it right as well and never stops to congratulate itself on how cleverly it is recreating the style of the genre, never gives an ironic smirk to the audience. The cast behave within the context of their characters personality and circumstances. What it does do differently is let those characters have some fun, crank the insanity up and really let it grow into all the spaces we found the exploitation films of glorious gutters past: Revenge. Serial murder. Loss of faith. Redemption. Cults/the occult. Strippers. The seedy underbelly of society. Prostitution. With all these things and more the cast has plenty to have fun with as the film reaches more ambitiously than previous entries in the genres resurgence did, even those with hundreds of times the budget.

FATHER'S DAY follows the story of Ahab (Adam Brooks), driven by vengeance to try to stop the savage Father's Day Killer Chris Fuchman (Mackenzie Murdock). Calling Fuchman a killer though really doesn't tell the whole story. See, he gets around to killing the poor fathers he selects eventually. First though he likes to mutilate them a bit, rape them, eat them and then maybe kill them.

This is all lovingly rendered in what squares would argue is far too much detail by the ASTRON-6 special effects crew of Steve Kostanski and Adam Brooks. You'll be treated to some brutal scenes of cannibalism and violence that include a severed head giving…well…head and an oral emasculation that is truly cringe-worthy.

Still with us after the oral emasculation? Everybody back from Wikipedia? Good.

Ahab's father was naturally murdered by Fuchman and this event has set Ahab on a path of revenge that consumes his life. Everyone thinks the Father's Day Killer is gone for good but when Twink's (Conor Sweeney) father is raped, eaten and killed the signal is out that Fuchman is back and it is up to a priest, Father John Sullivan (Matthew Kennedy), to find Ahab as he is the only one who can stop the Fuchman (go ahead, pronounce it that way and laugh).

Ahab, Twink and Father Sullivan team up along with Ahab's alluring and dangerous sister Chelsea (Amy Groening) who has been following clues about Fuchman while Ahab has been away. Insanity proceeds to ensue and we all have a great time watching it unfold.

The film is beautifully shot and full of gritty touches both intentional and as a result of the $10,000 budget the movie was made on. I'm still not sure how they got it to look that good for that kind of money, but some of the things they do here is magic. The stuff that comes off cheap never feels out of place, in fact it adds to that dirty exploitation movie vibe. The adversity they faced making the movie translates into the film and I think brings us as viewers closer to the story. It's hard to tell where they were short on cash and what was just capturing the aesthetic and I know that takes way more work than a lot of moviegoers will appreciate.

I've already touched on the gore and makeup effects but I wanted to be sure to mention that there is some great animation and creature effects, weirdly and wonderfully executed by Steve Kostanski. His style really is his own and it is used to purposeful effect in the climax of the film.

Music is another key piece of capturing the feel of these films and the original music in the soundtrack by Jeremy Gillespie is dead on. Grim and urgent synths drive Ahab along on his quest for revenge and the music really transports us into that world. I'm reminded of John Carpenter's classic score for ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13 in places.

My only real complaint about the movie was that the final act could have been cut a little tighter. I'm watching an older cut of the film though so that may have already happened by now. UPDATE: It has. I've seen the proper final cut and the pacing issues are largely ironed out. Thanks Adam!

All told, FATHER'S DAY delivers real shock and awe. The gore is extreme and delivers the shock. The awe is reserved for appreciating how much was done for so little. It's a true labour of love for the filmmakers and I really admire that. The movie plays like a nostalgic mash-up of the midnight movie genre remixed with a sense of fun and modern sensibility instead of the typical irony we see in these pictures and it's incredibly refreshing. It's destined to become a midnight movie classic and ASTRON-6 have successfully made themselves a part of that canon.

If you are fortunate enough to be in one of the select cities FATHER'S DAY is screening in then you need to get your friends together and go. Seeing this in the theatre as it is meant to be seen is an experience you don't want to miss. You can check here for show times .

The movie was produced by TROMA but I wouldn't call it a TROMA movie. It's a brave move for them to step outside their comfort zone and get into something like FATHER'S DAY and I want to congratulate them for recognizing the enormous talent of ASTRON-6. It's important for filmmakers who are also readers of my blog to see that it can happen; that things can go from some guys making movies in the garage or basement or wherever to your own New York City premiere on the big screen. Thank you to Lloyd Kaufman for continuing to be a leader in indie filmmaking. Lloyd was among the first of us mutants who realized we didn't need or want Hollywood anymore and has spread that mutant gene to millions.

I've said this before about ASTRON-6 and I will say it again: their movies aren't for everyone and this is certainly no exception but they are undeniable masters of genre styling and that shows in everything they do. They make movies for people who love movies and who love fun. You like movies right? You like fun? Then ASTRON-6 want your brain for a few hours, they promise to give it back.

UPDATE: Just after posting the proper draft I was talking to Adam Brooks and yes, the cut I saw was not the final cut and the pacing issues in the third act have been worked on. I'm going to watch the proper cut tonight and bring back the verdict.

UPDATE 2: I've seen the proper final cut and yes, the third act plays a lot smoother now. Appreciate the correction. Let no man or woman say this blog lacks journalistic integrity!