The title of HYSTERICAL PSYCHO (currently awaiting theatrical release after assorted festival dates) refers to at least one of the characters and is a pretty good description of the movie itself as well. It’s a berserk, over-the-top, wildly uneven assault of humorous and homagistic horror that’s decidedly not for all tastes—but those who do enjoy its flavor are gonna eat it up.

The feature writing/directing debut of actor Dan Fogler (seen last year paying tribute to a different strain of genre worship in FANBOYS) offers up a Hitchcock homage and a fart joke in its first minute, conveyed via old-fashioned black-and-white animation—a fair indication of the breadth and variety of influences at work here. The sequence that follows offers up a history of Moon Lake, which is imbued with “lunar radiation” that can unbalance any mind unfortunate enough to come near it. After a brief color interlude, cut to gritty black and white and a van full of New York theater types headed upstate for a stay at the Moon Lake Inn Motel to “find themselves.” Literally introduced as archetypes before we get to know all their names, they have scarcely settled in before…

But if you’ve seen any of the classic horror flicks that Fogler and company obviously have, you don’t need any more plot synopsis than that. Plot isn’t the issue in HYSTERICAL PSYCHO anyway, but rather the volume (both quantitative and auditory) of gags and references that can be thrown at the audience. NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD and THE EVIL DEAD are only the most obvious visual inspirations (co-star Kelly Hutchinson even bears a strong resemblance to the latter’s Ellen Sandweiss), though the threat comes not from flesheating zombies but a bloodthirsty nutcase who gets his own expository flashback and lots of weird color intercuts to express the twisted psyche dwelling within him. There’s plenty of black-and-white gore (rich chocolate-syrupy goodness by makeup FX artist Anthony Pepe), a literal running gag about vomit and assorted varieties of sourced music that’s sometimes played so loud, it seems as determined to kill the dialogue as the madman is to bump off the dwindling number of friends.

{jcomments on}