

## “SWEATSHOP” (Film Review)

Written by Audrey Quaranta  
Thursday, 10 June 2010 12:35

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A title like SWEATSHOP might call to mind images of grave social injustices around the world, but I assure you, this movie does not portray what its name directly implies. What you'll find instead is something so horrible, so offensive, it will make Nike's worst crimes seem innocent. This, my friends, is the brutal murder of raver kids.

DOMAIN OF THE DAMNED's Stacy Davidson directs—from a script he co-penned with Ted Geoghegan, who also produced with Laura Bryant—the story of Charlie (Ashley Kay), a young woman who has made a name for herself in the rave scene by throwing the most outrageous parties. Except that it's not really Charlie's story, even though she's initially set up as the film's leading lady. There is video footage to be found of her freshly dumped boyfriend about to get it on with another chick—before being murdered, of course—in the very abandoned factory where she and some friends are throwing her latest bash. Yet for much of the film, she's barely present, and the audience doesn't get to follow her expected journey from strong woman to heartbroken girl to potential survivor/heroine. That can also be construed as a strength of SWEATSHOP, however, since it's difficult to completely peg who's going to be the “final girl” until all of the others are dead. Any amount of unpredictability is helpful in a splatter/slasher film with such a simplistic story. To summarize:

Charlie is throwing a huge party. Her ex-boyfriend is a jerk. She's bummed, but her pals are with her and they have an hour to set up before the rave begins. The gang includes Miko (Julin), Scottyboy (Peyton Wetzel), Lolli (Krystal Freeman), Kim (Danielle Jones), Jade (Melanie Donihoo), Wade (Brent D. Himes), Kenny (Vincent Guerrero) and Enix (Naika Malveaux). Miko is your typical fake-dreads-and-platform-boots-wearing type, Scotty is your typical jerk, Lolli is your typical oversexed lesbian and so on. There are a few subplots and conflicts mixed in, and a lot of sexual encounters.



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However, none of this is why you should watch SWEATSHOP. Well, OK, maybe the sex.

But SWEATSHOP really starts to kick ass when the kids start dying. This movie may have no characters worthy of deep investment, but when a hulking killer called The Beast (Jeremy Sumrall), wielding a gigantic sledgehammer, starts picking these ravers off like he’s squishing ants at a picnic, you realize why these people really exist: to be destroyed in all sorts of fun and fantastic ways. Raves are places for unapologetic, reckless fun, where anything goes—and whether consciously or not, Davidson parallels this notion in his filmmaking, resulting in “Oh shit!” moments galore. It all culminates in a splatter lover’s dream of an ending that is both funny and appropriately nasty.

And this is why SWEATSHOP (which Synapse Films will release on DVD early next year) has my approval and will have yours as well, especially if you’re a fellow gorehound. The film’s visual/technical qualities shine as well, combining Davidson’s excellent cinematography with very well-done gore FX by Kristi Boul, Marcus Koch and Mike Oliver. In the sound department, Dwayne Cathey’s unique music acts as effective background accompaniment to the screams and splats.

If you’re looking for a fully developed, character-driven story, go rent GONE WITH THE WIND. Otherwise, stick with SWEATSHOP (in which you can also catch a cameo by Fango’s Mike Gingold), and I can guarantee you’ll have a lot more fun.



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