

“BATTLE GIRL: THE LIVING DEAD IN TOKYO BAY” (DVD Review)

Written by Michael Koopmans
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If you know the name Kazuo “Gaira” Komizu, it’s probably as director of the super-slimy and super-gory ENTRAILS/GUTS OF A VIRGIN/BEAUTIFUL WOMAN films, which feature (can you guess?) entrails, guts, beautiful women and a phallus monster. His 1991 film BATTLE GIRL: THE LIVING DEAD IN TOKYO BAY (just out on DVD from Synapse Films) is another story.

Unlike Komizu’s prior works, this one can’t be judged solely by its title. The main reason this film does not ooze in snugly with the rest of Komizu’s somewhat sleazy catalog is probably because it’s the only film he directed that he didn’t also write. Maybe if he did, there’d be a more coherent plot—and a penis creature or two.

Pay attention, because this is going to get a little confusing: A meteorite crashes into Tokyo Bay, creating a dome of steam around Tokyo that contains particles of an unknown fused heavy metal. A chemical reaction between the steam and the nitrogen in the air creates a cosmo-amphetamine that attaches itself to human DNA. Now, everyone living in Tokyo is a carrier of this cosmo-amphetamine, and once dead, the hosts return to life as the type of flesheating zombies we all know and love (sort of).



Three days pass, and about 6.5 million of Tokyo’s population are now ghouls. A state of martial law is declared. Military Captain Fujuka takes charge of the situation and sets up a blockade around Tokyo, letting no one in or out. You see, he gets it in his head that the rest of the world will think less of Japan for being struck by a meteorite, and destroy it. To protect the nation he loves, he commands that experiments be performed on both the living and the living dead. A chemical containing that same cosmo-amphetamine is soon created in a lab, and the plan is to inject the undead with an overdose, thus turning them into mindless robots he can control. The explanation for this is as follows: “In the midst of national isolation...patriotism becomes

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intensified when the cosmo-amphetamine is injected.” He quickly produces an army of gun-toting, camouflage-clad, green-blooded creatures who will help him take over the world before it takes over him. However, only one obstacle stands in his way, and she’s a cutie.

Our heroine is K-ko (played by professional wrestler Cutie Suzuki), the daughter of levelheaded Colonel Kirihara who is currently stationed outside Tokyo. Her mission is to singlehandedly stop the threat of world domination, gather up all the survivors and rendezvous with her father, who will be waiting with a helicopter to transport the living out of the dead zone. To aid her mission, she is given an impressive-looking armored suit that gives her slight superhuman abilities and contains a few secret weapons, such as boot blades. Donning the outfit, she becomes the titular “Battle Girl,” armed with an Uzi and ready to kick some undead rumps.

Viewers who go into this one based on the title and box art alone will certainly leave hungry. Given a plot that revolves around a young girl in super-powered duds trapped in a combat zone with military-controlled zombies, there’s not as much zombie slaughter as you’d think. With a premise like that, it seems the story would write itself. You’d also assume that a pro wrestler was cast in the lead (and I recognized at least three others in the supporting cast) due to her lineage, but only two wrestling moves (a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker and a piledriver) appear in the entire film. What little hand-to-hand combat appears is poorly choreographed, and I could probably count the amount of bullets fired with my fingers and toes. Don’t get me wrong—there are a handful of decapitation and flesh-munching scenes, they’re just pebbles compared to the copious flying fists, spin kicks and gore you’d expect. BATTLE GIRL doesn’t try to be anything more than it is; there’s no striking portrait of mankind’s will to survive, no social commentary, just a lot of wacky tongue-in-cheek antics that make the confusing plot a lot easier to sit through.

This was obviously a labor of love, and Komizu makes up for what little budget he had with creativity. The FX are very simple, practical and sometimes ridiculous, but the film’s tone makes it more charming than irritating. On the DVD, BATTLE GIRL: THE LIVING DEAD IN TOKYO BAY is presented in a full-frame digital transfer with newly translated English subtitles. There’s only one special feature—an informative 54-minute interview with the director, who chain-smokes while lightly touching upon the stress and expectations that accompany the production of a low-budget film.

So give this one a try; maybe rent it first if you want to play it safe. If you know what to expect, and try not to take it too seriously, you’ll have a good time. With insults like “Take a dump and go to bed!”, it’s kind of hard not to have a small place in the sewers of your heart for this one.

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MOVIE: **1/2

DVD PACKAGE: **1/2