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### DAY OF THE AX

by Heidi Martinuzzi (2004-10-21)

2004, Un-rated, 90 Minutes, Fourth Floor Pictures

CREDITS

Fourth floor pictures has come up with some pretty cool stuff in the past, which is why I was expecting so much more from "Day of the Ax". "Dead Body Man" was one of the most entertaining low budget horror films I've ever seen, and I really enjoyed the combination of horror, gore, and offbeat comedy. "Day of the Ax", however, doesn't have that comedic edge that made "Dead Body Man" so unique and stylish. It's a very brutal film that focuses more on gore and violence than on any kind of amusement...

The cast is quite mixed, some of the players are close to brilliant, while some seem very uncomfortable and unrehearsed. The same can be said for the special effects; they are definitely superior in many ways than those in "Dead Body Man", but while the computer generated effects are quite nice, sometimes they can be distracting and out of place. With a plot that is suspiciously similar to two films; "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre" and "House of 1000 Corpses" (which in and of itself is similar to "The Texas Chainsaw



#### FilmThreat Poll

Sounds like Wesley Snipes may not have much faith in "Blade Trinity". But do you?

- 1) Yes! Oh, how I love the Blade!
- 2) No! They got lucky with the first two.
- 3) Who cares?

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Massacre”), “Day of the Ax” also incorporates other classic horror elements into its slasher story, involving religion, evil, Satan, woods, incest, inbred hicks, and of course, an insane asylum.

What Cavalline does do well is mix crime scene footage with regular sequences to tell background stories while changing look, feel, and mood of the film at various intervals. This technique is interesting and segments the film into calmer moments between the violent onslaughts of visual viciousness that make up every other frame of the film. Unfortunately, Cavalline has to direct some pretty terrible actors. Every actor in this film is awful, save the following exceptions; Suzi Lorraine is beautiful, charismatic, and graceful as Mary Ann, a victim of the villains who has managed to escape from her enslavement only to meet with a worse fate. Suzi is well directed, intense, and evokes pity, sadness, and pain with her realism, but she’s one hot chick too. Tina Krause has a lead role in this film as Sweetie, the daughter and sister in the demented family that, of course, lives out in the woods and terrorizes poor young women. This may be Tina’s best performance (at least that I’ve seen). She usually tends to hold back from intensity, but in this film she gives everything and the strength of her character really comes out. Tina provides an almost embarrassing contrast to the lead actress, who is terrible. Eddie Benevich, the talented and hysterical character actor from “Dead Body Man” is the ringleader in the mad family who asserts that he is the son of the devil, and plans to repopulate the earth with the devil’s progeny through the capture and rape of innocent young women. Unfortunately, Eddie is wearing a mask the entire time and never speaks. It’s a shame and a waste, because Eddie is a talented actor and he would have been able to bring so much more to the role if his character hadn’t been silent and faceless. Peter Blesset is captivating as the only actor who gets most of the screen time, most of the lines, and most of it right. Peter is animated and dynamic as Pluto, a militaristic and psychotic killer who aids his older brother JR in the capture of women. It’s too bad that Pluto is a rip off of Chop Top, Bill Mosely’s character in “The Texas Chainsaw Massacre II”. The similarities between Peter’s mannerisms, language, costume, and attitude and that of Chop Top are way too close for anyone to miss. Peter does a great Chop Top impression, however, and Bill Mosely should be flattered.

Though “Texas Chainsaw Massacre” is closest in storyline and basic plot to “Day of the Ax”, there are definitely elements that remind me of other films. The fact that there is an unnamed evil that is behind the killings and the madness is reminiscent of the “Halloween” movies and the plight of Michael Myers. The “masked stalker in the forest” reminds me of “Friday the 13th”, with Jason stomping around the woods in his hockey mask. Oddly enough, the movie that I think really is similar to “Day of the Ax” is “Pumpkinhead” due to the rural setting and the folkloric storyline. Stylistically, “Day of the Ax” is quite consistent and at times disturbingly lovely in its brutality. Long, uncut takes and grueling intensity add to the grittiness of the storyline and make it all the more frightening. The fairy-tale quality that it somehow manages to retain is what makes this film stand out from other cheap slasher flicks...The similarity to stories we’ve seen before, makes it seem more like a re-telling of an old myth than a rip-off of another movie.

The special makeup effects in “Day of the Ax” are pretty cool. One scene, in particular, when a hand is severed from a live victim is actually so realistic it made me want to vomit. I applaud the effects team and the cinematographer on the clever camera angles, and the choice of dismembered fingers that led to the grotesqueness of that scene.

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“Day of the Ax” is low budget. And it is horror. For most people that’s two major marks against it to begin with. Like other indie horror slasher flicks, “Day of the Ax” probably deserves more credit for promoting the myth that somewhere out in the forest, crazy inbred hicks who worship Satan are waiting to rape you/kill you/eat you/or worse than it will be given. I mean, who needs to go into the woods anyway? Not me. Not with THOSE hicks out there.... “Day of the Ax” is a better than average indie horror movie and Ryan Cavalline just needs better actors in order to achieve a better film.



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