

Jeff Kirkendall's Thoughts For The Month Column

Thoughts, Opinions, Reviews, Commentary & More!

Hello and Welcome! My name is Jeff Kirkendall and I'm an independent filmmaker and actor from the Upstate New York area. This is the section of the Very Scary Productions website where I write about topics related to independent filmmaking, digital video production, acting, movies in general, horror movies in particular, my own indie movies, as well as anything and everything related or in between.

I decided to create this commentary page because I find that I often come across things that either interest me, excite me, intrigue me, or maybe just bug me. Any topic related to movies and cinema is fair game, from the most mainstream to the most controversial. For example I'll often read about movie projects that I have a strong interest in or opinion on, for one reason or another. This page gives me a forum to discuss these things. It's all about discussion and furthering understanding of our pop culture. Anyone who has feedback concerning what I have to say here, feel free to contact me (see the contact link at <http://www.veryscaryproductions.com/>).

I'd also like to point out that the following is just my opinion, and everyone is free to agree or disagree with what I have to say. Enjoy, and to all the Indies out there: Keep on Filming!

SUBJECT: Movie Recommendation: ***Slashers*** - November 2002

I very infrequently use the TFTM column to recommend or criticize movies. The reason for this is simply because most movies (probably around 99%) are either not spectacular enough to spend a whole column praising, or not terrible enough to spend a whole column ripping apart. Most movies fall somewhere in between these two extremes. However, when I watch a movie that lands in one of these two extreme regions, I will comment on it. The independent movie ***Slashers***, directed by Maurice Devereaux, is one such production.

Slashers is basically a spoof of reality television. The movie focuses on a hugely popular (fictional) Japanese reality show called *Slashers*. As the story goes, this show is debuting in the USA with a huge American special. Six willing contestants are competing for a large cash prize (I believe the sum was 18 million dollars). After an extravagant opening complete with music and dancing, and a perky host who could easily be on any game show, the contestants are let loose in a maze of rooms and corridors, where they are then pursued by three killers. There is Chainsaw Charlie, The Preacherman, and Doctor Ripper. The killers are loosely modeled after a few of today's more popular cinematic maniacs, and you can probably guess some of the weapons these psychos are carrying. The contestants each have distinct personalities and different reasons for being on the show aside from the money. (For example, one contestant wants her death to make a statement about the evils of such shows. Another may only have a short time to live and wants to go out with a bang. And still another is on the show because somebody dared them to do it, and so on.) The rules are simple: there are none. The contestant who comes out alive at the end of the hour wins.

Generally I am not a fan of reality television. The whole concept behind these shows just never appealed to me. I am also usually not a fan of most horror pictures that are intentionally or unintentionally campy. Mr. Devereaux's movie fits into both of these categories; however I really enjoyed it nonetheless. Even though the story might sound ridiculous, the whole thing manages to work and be very entertaining. The movie is so gleefully over the top, both because of the somewhat overdramatic acting of the contestants, and the broad theatrics of the killers, that it can't possibly be boring or dull. As much as I knew I really shouldn't, I couldn't help but identify with the contestants and their plight.

There are also some extremely clever ideas thrown into the mix. Because the point of the show is that people are willing to do anything for money, and, more specifically, that every shot counts, both the contestants and the killers must freeze during announced commercial breaks. This way the viewers will not miss a second of the action, thereby keeping the ratings as high as they can be. (This is enforced through the use of producer-controlled shock collars the participants wear around their necks) Needless to say, the commercials always seem to come at very climactic moments.

One thing gore hounds will no doubt appreciate is the ample amount of blood and guts on display here. Several contestants are dispatched by the killers in gruesome ways. Like the rest of the movie, this is extremely overdone as well. There are some moments where the gore effects are so excessive that it doesn't look particularly real. However this also doesn't deter from the movie, as it is right in line with the overall tone of the proceedings. Given these excesses, I was a bit surprised that the director didn't follow suit with the amount of nudity in the picture. Although one poor girl keeps getting her top ripped off repeatedly throughout the picture, having to run and cover herself with her arms, and another spends most of the proceedings shirtless, wearing only a black bra, the nudity isn't that excessive. Exploitation addicts might be a bit disappointed by this.

Another intriguing aspect of this picture is the fact that it was shot on high definition video. This gives the production a crystal-clear look, with none of the film grain we're accustomed to seeing. The glossy image really complements this already unique movie, especially in the opening scenes of the show when the players are being introduced. It helps to enhance the carnival atmosphere of the program.

Finally, the DVD release is packed with extras, including deleted sequences and behind the scenes footage. Since this is a Fangoria Presents picture, there are trailers for other Fangoria home video releases, as well as a long and detailed magazine article about the movie. One thing that I thought was particularly interesting (and unbelievable) was that the director got the idea for the movie from a real Japanese reality show where they subject willing contestants to various forms of torture.

In conclusion, this is an extremely entertaining picture that is really different from anything I've seen in awhile. However as much as I liked the movie, I'm sure there will be those (like the friend I watched it with) who really dislike it. **Slashers** is definitely one of those pictures you'll really love, or you'll think is extremely stupid. I strongly recommend checking out this movie. Just remember not to play that **Slashers** theme song too many times repeatedly in one sitting!