

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 Review – **Machete** - September 2010

Note: The following movie review may contain plot details which could be considered spoilers.

* What was first a mock movie trailer presented during the intermission of the **Grindhouse** double-feature has now become a full-length B-movie extravaganza courtesy of directors Robert Rodriguez and Ethan Maniquis. **Machete** is a mix of non-stop action, bloody mayhem and hot babes which follows an ex-Federale (Danny Trejo, in his first starring role) as he tries to avenge the killing of his wife by a drug kingpin (Steven Seagal in a rare bad-guy role). Years after losing his wife to the crime boss, Machete is working as a laborer when he is spotted by a politician's aide (Jeff Fahey), who blackmails him into performing a hit on the Senatorial hopeful. However a double-cross quickly follows and our hero becomes a wanted man, pursued by both sides of the law. The illegal immigration debate provides a backdrop to Machete's saga of personal retribution. Other major characters in this story include an honest immigration officer (sexy Jessica Alba), a freedom fighter of sorts (an equally sexy Michelle Rodriguez), and a ruthless good ole' boy (played by an almost unrecognizable Don Johnson). Robert De Niro stars as the corrupt politician bent on securing the border using any means necessary.

The plot of **Machete** is serviceable enough, as is long-standing character actor Danny Trejo in the lead role. However the real draw in this film is the surrounding cast, along with the extreme mix of action, bloody violence, gratuitous nudity, and overall 70's-style B-movie fun. Cast standouts include Fahey as the tough but smooth-talking political aide, and Steven Seagal, whose criminal character I can only describe as interesting. Besides the aforementioned main players, this film includes appearances by Cheech Marin, Lindsay Lohan and makeup artist-turned-actor Tom Savini. (Being the horror fan I

am, it's great to see Tom enjoying this successful second career). Yes, **Machete** is definitely a movie where one keeps looking forward to the next cool cameo appearance. Also, in the course of the film our hero dispatches the bad guys in so many brutal ways one loses count, ranging from simple impalements with sharp objects to a scene where he shreds a thug's intestines with surgical tools and then uses the intestines to swing out a window to the floor below. Much of this is done in an over-the-top, campy style, while other parts are gruesome enough to satisfy most gore hounds. However one chooses to describe it, the bloody mayhem moves at a furious pace. This grindhouse package is completed with lots of sexy babes and bare skin. ** Audiences are treated to seeing Lindsay Lohan nude in a pool scene, as well as Jessica Alba nude in the shower (although interestingly enough both these nude scenes could be described as tasteful nudity, with Lohan's hair mostly covering her bare breasts and Alba artfully posed in a moment of steamy contemplation, part of which was used in the film's television trailers).

Put simply, **Machete** is 105 minutes of pure exploitative fun for anyone who likes non-stop action, bloody mayhem, hot babes, gratuitous nudity, and everything else that comes with a 70's-style grindhouse picture. And as those who chose to stay and sit through the end credits know, we may be seeing more of our scarred hero in two upcoming sequels - *Machete Kills* and *Machete Kills Again*. Now that would make for quite a grindhouse double-bill!

* To read my review of **Grindhouse**, see the May 2007 TFTM column.

** Given her off-screen bad girl persona, it's ironic that Lindsay Lohan here plays a bad girl who gets naked in a pool for a webcam show, and generally causes lots of strife for her father.