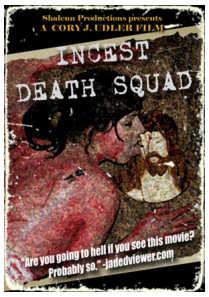
The trouble with a moral compass is failure to acknowledge shifting poles. When I've made statements like "sacred cows beg for slaughter," and "the very concept of a taboo subject invites irreverence," all I'm really saying is, "I am completely lacking the foresight to predict a movie called INCEST DEATH SQUAD and the possibility that I will be asked to review it."

Now that I've seen everything from torture to rape to bestiality to concentration camps to JACKASS on the big screen, I remain convinced that any topic can have cinematic value. When a short film portrayed a guy screwing a corpse and wiping his ass with a picture of Jesus (was that Joe Christ, or are my wires crossed?), or when Baltimore-based filmmaker Dan Bell showed me a man vomiting into a prostitute's crotch, I never resented those directors. Taste is subjective, and a challenge to personal taste can strengthen your resolve. As someone hungry for unique and courageous film experiences, committing to that premise means not taking offense at movies for treating my personal beliefs indelicately. Until the RINGU girl actually gets her tape distributed, I will never argue that a movie shouldn't exist. All of the above are statements I resolutely made before INCEST DEATH SQUAD showed up on my doorstep, reminding me that I count among my closest friends a pair of (unrelated) incest survivors who have both lived in my house, one of whom I used to accompany to group. Either one of them could in fact be reading this review right now.



I am a jackass. Reviewing INCEST DEATH SQUAD is my fitting punishment for having a big mouth. For the first time in my entire life, a movie had offended me on principle alone. So was I going to be appalled and let the filmmakers win? Had they conquered my resolve with one word? Would I be watching DEATH SQUAD if that title hadn't flipped me off and called me a bitch to my face? The producers of I.D.S. (as the DVD spine identifies it) had the balls to make the movie, so either they have considered the possibility of a reviewer who takes the subject seriously, or they thought, "It's FANGORIA! I'm sure they *love* incest-ploitation!"

Well…no. I, however, do value a personal challenge. Unfortunately to those ends, the title has more punch than anything in the flick itself. INCEST DEATH SQUAD is a witless amateur video

that never for a moment feels like a movie, regardless of the inclusion or omission of prohibitive subject matter.

I will advocate that microbudget filmmaking should be appreciated on its own merits, but the producers of I.D.S. are underachievers. I can always look past flat lighting and a hissing soundtrack, but scene after scene of I.D.S. plays like somebody grabbed a video camera and pointed it at their friends. Some of the cast clearly try (I have no doubt that main antagonist Greg Johnson could be great), but any positive performance choices are stranded by sloppy cinematography that zooms with no method, editing that cuts with no timing and tedious scenes of endless dialogue, most of it delivered haltingly and awkwardly. Lloyd Kaufman classes up the joint solely by expressing ideas with energy, his presence only reminding us that Troma does these kinds of movies well by comparison.

Which is a shame. The title is why I volunteered to watch and review INCEST DEATH SQUAD, thinking I would be testing my mettle, but the movie is such a non-event that introducing an incendiary subject into it is putting lipstick on a pig. Besides the constant verbal references, nothing about the storyline would change if the family connection between the lead incestuous couple were removed (Incest Death Duo would be more appropriate). Incest is ultimately too hardcore a concept for these filmmakers, an arbitrary immorality they thoughtlessly tossed into their goofy hodgepodge of a horror flick. The makers of the equally no-budget BLACK DEVIL DOLL at least had the sense to know why their concept was offensive, and they played to it. I.D.S. has no such awareness and turns the titular subject into a non-issue.

Which is the biggest disappointment. I was prepared for a movie that would actually push my own personal envelope. Is it fair to hold those films to their horrific real-life implications? Or is that just playing into their joke—the producers know that what they've done is tasteless. Getting uppity about it constitutes a beaching on the far shore of Irony Creek, aligning yourself with self-righteous pundits and advocates who claim to exercise the deciding vote on our cultural limits. Then again, exploitation of serious issues for shock cinema has become so commonplace that new filmmakers can't seem to conceive of people out there taking this shit seriously. Compare that attitude to classics of the genre; has it occurred to you that ISLA: SHE-WOLF OF THE SS was produced and released during a time when many Holocaust survivors were still alive? David F. Friedman even had the nerve to dedicate the movie to them.

On the value of the feature alone, INCEST DEATH SQUAD would only offend grindhouse neophytes. DVD features include six minutes of behind-the-scenes footage and charming interviews that are uncannily reminiscent of AMERICAN MOVIE. Looks like INCEST DEATH SQUAD was fun to make, but advice to no-budget producers: There are expectations for

exploitation movies the same as any other flick, and when you take one on, you need to deliver. If you have the guts to call your movie INCEST DEATH SQUAD, you should have guts to spare on the actual flick. Instead, we get weak comedy and nothing you haven't seen done better. The title is an attempt to draw attention to a movie that under no circumstances would invite it otherwise.

MOVIE: *
DVD PACKAGE: *

{jcomments on}