Written by Toby McCasker
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Every year, Sydney, Australia plays ghoulish host to A Night of Horror. It's called "*A Night of Horror*," but it's really more like a week or so, because "A Week or So of Horror" is about as wieldy as a lead hatchet. A festival of frights gorging itself on a diet of sinister submissions from local and international filmmakers, it's the only one of its kind in Australia and has become such an institution it now lays claim to the odd premiere or two.

This year's event was made particularly conspicuous by the world debuts of Seve Schelenz' SKEW, Jason Stoddard's THE AFFLICTED, Scott Leberecht's MIDNIGHT SON and Jorje Krippe's #12. Whilst these were the shows many came to see, it was frequently the wildcards sulking in the shadows of independent production that stole gasps of amazed fear and/or loathing from the chests of tipsy audiences (the Dendy Newtown, which frequently serves as venue for the festival, encourages patrons to quaff house wine heartily throughout). Only the most striking—be it for all the wrong or right reasons; sometimes it'd hard to tell the difference—of this year's slithering cinematic hopefuls are accounted for here. But be assured: it was a night (week) that left many a horror-buff tingly with glee.

DESCENDENTS: This Chilean film looks enjoyable enough if overly familiar. The world has succumbed to an airborne contagion that instantly transforms the living into murderous white-eyed facsimiles of themselves, and any survivors now cower under the reactionist yoke of a fearful, militant government. Where its path diverges from the standard postapocalyptic zombie thing is that director Jorge Olguín (of Fango Video's SANGRE ETERNA fame) speeds up evolution a little (a lot) and introduces the concept of children who are immune to the virus, having been born with gills and vaguely inferred dreams of the ocean. I say "vaguely" because DESCENDENTS culminates in the most bizarre, left-field conclusion of any of the films on display (and the most vertigo-triggering camerawork). It's so bizarre it teeters on the brink of the *deus ex machina* pit but doesn't quite fall in, owing to the fact that a very, very loose effort is made throughout to signal the ultimate arrival of a gigantic, Apache-crushing octopus that will deliver us all. Hideously odd and unrepentantly amateur, DESCENDENTS must be seen to be disbelieved.

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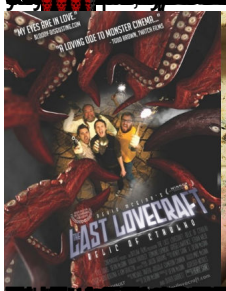

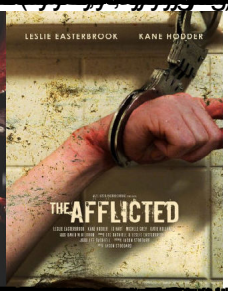

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That's a wrap. To find out about future editions of the A Night of Horror festival, go here.