Written by Dave Pace
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Astron-6, makers of the cult hit FATHER'S DAY, are back in theatres with MANBORG and their latest short film, BIO-COP (rolling out across Canada this month, details here). The team's SFX and stop-motion guru, Steven Kostanski, has taken to the directors' chair to deliver their special brand of retro-pop homage; this time a payment of respect to the video action cheesefests of the 80s and early 90s. Famous for making FATHER's DAY for a budget of only $10,000, MANBORG gets what it gives out of only a thousand bucks and the pure love of the craft from Kostanski and company.

MANBORG tells us the story of a soldier in the Hell Wars (Matthew Kennedy), some undetermined point in Earth's history. When his brother is killed in battle against the forces of Count Draculon (Adam Brooks), he takes a stand against the monster and is cut down, only to be revived as a super-powered cyborg on the streets of Mega-Death City. There, he meets #1 Man, a kung fu fighting hero played by Ludwig Lee, but voice dubbed by Kyle Hebert (the voice of Ryu in the most recent STREET FIGHTER video games).

From there, they join Aussie gunfighter Justice (Conor Sweeney) and his sister Mina (Meredith Sweeney) in the fight to first escape the clutches of the evil tyrant with a heart of gold, The Baron (Jeremy Gillespie), and then topple Dracluon himself.

If it sounds silly, that's because it is. It's also wickedly funny, with bizarre comedic moments popping out at you from all sides. MANBORG plays it straight within the crazy direct-to-video universe it inhabits and we get to reap the rewards. If you got excited when you saw Christopher Lambert or Rutger Hauer on a video cover, MANBORG will push those same buttons in you. Hard.

There is so much to love in MANBORG, so many gifts to cult movie fans. That said, not everyone is charmed by the lo-fi green screen antics. It's important people understand what they are going to see, namely a movie made for $1000 and shot mostly on a green screen set built in Kostanski's garage. If you can't embrace the campy good times then perhaps this isn't your thing. For those of us who can, MANBORG delivers better than anything we've seen to date.

Opening for MANBORG as it plays select theatres in Canada is the new Astron-6 short BIO-COP, another dazzling basement tribute to cult films of the 80s. The titular BIO-COP was a product of a toxic waste accident, making him effectively indestructible and giving him grotesque powers. I don't want to give much away, but this faux-trailer gives us a pretty fresh take on a familiar plot.

Expect a lot of awesome gore, some totally hilarious moments and some amazing FX courtesy of Kostanski. Also present is the Astron- 6 signature ability to masterfully recreate the era. They consistently impress with their attention to detail, and leave us wondering if they slave over the pot until it's just right or if the aesthetics of these movies are a second language to them. This style of filmmaking is something that could only have come out of the culture of the remix, taking the best bits from the video store classics and firing them back with a modern eye. Like the DJ, they sample the hooks that tug on that part of our brains that remembers these movies; the carefree nights of the 1980s with some friends sleeping over and a pile of new rentals. The result is the ultimate geeky mixed tape of a youth spent in the aisles of the video store, seeking that next hit of cinematic dope that jacks up those nerdy receptors in our brains.

If ROBOT JOX and I COME IN PEACE were the drugs of choice to feed our need for cheese back then, the arrival of MANBORG and BIO-COP is like Nuke hitting the streets in ROBOCOP 2. Your mind will get blown if you just sit back and take the ride.

MANBORG and BIO-COP: 💀💀💀💀