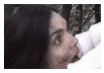

Synapse Films could never be accused of catering to the mainstream, but even by their standards, a few curiosities get released alongside the classics. So for every masterpiece like their two-disc STREET TRASH DVD, there’s some strange movie that Synapse appears to be sharing with a chuckle and a “Can you believe someone made this?” RESONNANCES, a microbudget French sci-fi/horror flick produced in 2006, falls somewhere between the two.

Featuring digital FX that The Asylum might embrace, RESONNANCES was written, directed, produced and shot by Phillipe Robert, a 2nd-unit director on one of the Asterix-and-Obelix films featuring Gérard Depardieu. The copy on the DVD case embraces the standard-definition photography and limited budget of RESONNANCES as selling points, but the movie is notably better shot and paced than most of its low-budget contemporaries, even as it appears to have been produced as an exercise or quite possibly just for fun.

The story opens with an asteroid crashing into the countryside of ancient France, releasing a relentless creature that burrows beneath the dirt and attacks a peasant washerwoman, establishing the film’s method of alternating effective DIY physical illusions with unimpressive CGI. Transition to several hundred years later, and we join a group of attractive young people looking to have fun and get laid, convincing us (along with DEAD SNOW) that European college-aged kids are exactly like underplayed versions of their American counterparts—or

maybe that Euro horror movies aren’t above importing stereotypes from American genre flicks. En route to their next party spot, a hitchhiker (Patrick Mons, carrying a bit of the same menacing charisma that Tim Roth brings to villains) is picked up, but the night is without incident—until the car is besieged by a ghostly apparition and tentacles that attack from underground.

That case copy namechecks THE THING, THE EVIL DEAD and TREMORS, and while the film shares a subterranean monster with the latter title, the overall effect is closer to Peter Jackson’s BAD TASTE, with its sporadic plot and actors who appear more cheerfully committed to being in a movie than delivering real performances. The cast is generally appealing, including shaggy loser Vincent Lecompte and Sophie Michard as the kind of girl who inspires you to move to l'Hexagone, though character development is nonexistent and the fatality order won’t inspire emotions more complex than surprise. Yet while RESONNANCES is hardly engrossing, it does entertain on the strength of clever moments and the kind of twists that routinely get test-marketed out of Hollywood fare (sample gag: two men lift their injured friend and run from the advancing alien beast, continuing to run long after they’re carrying a fleshless skeleton).

Unlike Synapse’s best discs, this one sports no special features beyond a theatrical trailer. The movie is the whole package, and while it doesn’t quite achieve the company’s claim that this is an “ambitious love letter to independent DIY genre filmmakers everywhere,” if that statement describes an experience you can appreciate, then you will find much to like in this odd little French flick.

{jcomments on}