THE VIOLENT KIND (out this week on DVD and Blu-ray from Image Entertainment) feels vintage. Not in a *faux*-grindhouse sort of way, and not because of its ’50s/rockabilly aesthetic. THE VIOLENT KIND’s old-school vibe is a direct result of it being batshit in a way today’s genre films rarely are anymore. Which is to say, it’s kind of wonderful.

The Butcher Brothers’ low-budget affair takes Cody (Cory Knauf) and his brother Q (Bret Roberts), sons of a California biker legend, up to a family cabin to celebrate their mother’s birthday with the rest of the extended “family.” While the flowing beer, fistfights and strained personal relationships are fun enough, the film really gets going when Cody’s ex Michelle (Tiffany Shepis) is mysteriously possessed. Said possession leads to the few remaining partygoers trapped with an off-their-rocker crew of rockabillies and multiple occurrences of the unexplained.

Increasingly rambunctious as it charges on (especially once Vernon, played by Joe Egender, and his pack of charged-up greasers enters the picture), THE VIOLENT KIND is consistently unpredictable, and not necessarily because it’s trying to be clever or subversive; it’s just out-there. At times, that’s a disadvantage, since the story (as happens with many horror films) eventually becomes less interested in Cody and heroine Megan (Christina Prousalis) and much more concerned with the befuddling, villainous fun of Vernon and his sidekicks Jazz (Joseph McKelheer), Murderball (Samuel Child), Trixie (Mackenzie Firgens) and Pussywagon (Ilea Matthews).

This is still not necessarily a bad thing, as each member of the bunch throws caution to the wind and really puts their all into the proceedings, with Egender most notably emerging as the late-stage star. The Butcher Brothers know the audience won’t be killing themselves with questions as to Cody and Megan’s romantic possibilities—at least, not when Jazz is accentuating his lines with a little two-step in two-tone wingtips, or Trixie and Pussywagon are busy on all fours barking at each other. That’s not to say that Knauf, Prousalis and Roberts aren’t solid performers in their own right (they are)—it’s just that once the second half begins,

it’s no longer their show.

While a low-budget affair, THE VIOLENT KIND is certainly a step up in style and ambition from THE HAMILTONS (an earlier feature from the directing duo, which has garnered them a strong following, with many of the same cast), and looks great in the discs’ 1.78:1 transfers, especially on the Blu-ray. But it’s a little frustrating witnessing the scope and oddball imagination of the Butchers on display, especially in the movie’s final moments, and wishing they had more to work with. It’s also a little frustrating that the discs’ only accompanying features are some superfluous deleted scenes and an all-too-brief making-of. A commentary in which the Butchers discussed some of their choices, or even interviews with the actors about taking part in the film, would have been much-appreciated, and are sorely missed.

Undoubtedly an acquired taste, THE VIOLENT KIND is seemingly wild and absurd for the sake of being wild and absurd, which confines its more Lynchian qualities to surface-value comparisons (although THE HAMILTONS also seemed to be examining a sort of suburban weirdness). Nevertheless, it’s fun, exciting and feverish, tailor-made for a devoted audience to love it accordingly.

MOVIE: 💀💀💀💀

DVD/BLU-RAY PACKAGE: 💀💀💀💀

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