“The Killer Cut” of Jack Messitt’s MIDNIGHT MOVIE premieres tonight and plays Saturday-midnight shows through June in Westwood, CA, with extended and never-before-seen scenes and new, enhanced visual FX; Bigfoot Entertainment then releases a new special-edition DVD June 14 (click here for details and to order tix). Here’s Michael Gingold’s review of the original release.

Sometimes, all you need is a solid little low-budget horror film that isn’t desperately trying to break ground; it just delivers the goods with solid craft and a sense of what it’s doing. Among the countless slasher films coming out of the independent film scene these days, MIDNIGHT MOVIE stands out partially by not straining to outdo its contemporaries in the gore/torture department, or to emulate its forebears from the ’70s.

Indeed, the vintage film-within-the-film that causes all the trouble in MIDNIGHT MOVIE seems a bit erratically conceived. The square, black-and-white shooting style feels straight out of the ’60s, while the subject matter is directly inspired by the grisly drive-in fare of the following decade: A SCOOBY DOO-esque van full of youths breaks down in a rural area, with the kids seeking help at a nearby house where they’re slain one by one. This little opus, titled THE DARK BENEATH, starred its creator Ted Radford as its masked villain, and shortly after its completion, he went on a real-life rampage. The crazed auteur wound up in a loony bin, where, as seen in a prologue, one of his doctors ultimately comes to the conclusion that showing Radford his own production might aid in his therapy. Needless to say, this proves to be an extremely misguided idea; the result is a fresh massacre, with Radford disappearing from the premises.

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