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BANSHEE!!! (2008)

Published by [David Carter](#) on 2010/3/2 (82 reads)

Directed by Colin Theys
Review by David Carter



Released by Synthetic Cinema International
Running Time: 86 minutes
Rating: Not Rated
Color format: Color
Audio/Subtitles: 5.1 Dolby Digital Surround Stereo English/English & Spanish Subtitles
Region Code: 1, NTSC
Aspect Ratio: Anamorphic Widescreen
16:9 Enhanced: Yes
Special Features: Commentary track, outtakes, bloopers
Trailer Online: [Yes](#)



Short Version: Made-for-TV monster fun

The plot of BANSHEE!!! actually begins in the 1970s, when the titular creature dispatches with a trio of stoners on their way to satisfy their munchies. Taking the form of a beautiful woman before eating the men, the screaming monster inadvertently becomes trapped at the bottom of a lake during the ensuing car crash. Fast-forward to the present day, when rugged outdoorsman Jack unknowingly frees the now-cocooned banshee, unleashing terror into the Connecticut woods. A group of sexy college students shows up the next day and quickly finds themselves in the monster's path.

The above paragraph summarizes the first fifteen minutes of BANSHEE!!!; an inauspicious beginning to what appears will be a run-of-the-mill horror outing. Thankfully, the filmmakers swerve at the last second, avoiding a fall into clichéd horror movie territory. The next scene is an incredibly gory confrontation with the monster during which few of the college kids survive. At the sixteen minute mark, we have half of our potential victim pool out of the way, have seen the monster fully and are left to wonder where our formerly predictable story will now go. Going against tradition was an inspired choice by the filmmakers and one that completely renewed my interest in the film.



This creativity doesn't resurface much during the remainder of BANSHEE!!!, however. The surviving college students end up bunkering down with Jack and his aptly named nephew Rocker. Rocker shares what little information they have about the creature via flashback and the movie enters a protracted "trapped in a house" phase similar to FEAST, NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, and dozens more. Rocker and lead sexy college student Veronica hit it off and we add a love triangle to the already tense conditions in the house. Their situation becomes more desperate when the banshee makes its way into the home and those still living decide that it is time to fight back against the creature.

I was disappointed that the curve BANSHEE!!! threw me in the early minutes wasn't followed up with more of the same. The film slipped right back into typical horror tropes with the most egregious being the college students' flippant attitudes to seeing a ten-foot monster devour their friends. They run for their lives, of course, but they still have time to trade witty banter and bicker amongst themselves. Later, Veronica and Rocker's awkward romance seems even sillier given that there is a shape-shifting monster right outside. I know that monster movies aren't exactly known for realism and logical behavior, but the above examples are more a case of the film losing focus than of illogic. The comedic and romantic elements are shoe-horned into the film and they are an ill-fit in what is otherwise a decent horror film.

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There is a lot to like in BANSHEE!!! as well. The gore is exceptional and director/SFX guru Colin Theys does a good job of knowing when to be subtle and when to go all out. The monster itself is interesting and original and, in another example of eschewing modern horror patterns, the film doesn't waste momentum explaining the history of creature. The shape-shifting is a nice nod to John Carpenter's THE THING, but in BANSHEE!!! we see this used for more psychological rather than visceral scares as the monster takes on the forms of already dead characters. Not all of the comedy is misplaced like the example above – there is a very funny and effective scene where the monster takes the form of a girl scout to attack one of its victims. That scene alone is worth the price of admission for gore and horror/comedy fans.

This is my first experience with the Synthetic Cinema label but the same level of quality that I've seen from their parent company, MVD Visual, is shown here as well. Originally premiering on the Chiller Network, the print of BANSHEE!!! is excellent and comparable to that of most bigger-budget horror films. With a little bit of tweaking BANSHEE!!! could have been a much better film. It isn't bad in the state that it's in, however, and most monster movie fans will get a kick out of it.



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