

Home-made movie was as entertaining to make as it (hopefully) is to watch.



<http://bloodyreign.com/>

An interview with part-time amateur filmmaker Ben Martin.

A small band of creative “warriors” throw together a movie and the results are unexpected.

QUESTION: You're a 55 year old corporate guy. What made you want to direct this movie?

ANSWER: Ouch. What an ugly description. Well, I could answer that a lot of ways. First I could say it's because I have two teenagers who agreed with me it might be cool to make a movie with us as a family along with their friends. I could also answer that it's because I've been making movies off and on since I was a ten year old with an 8mm movie camera in 1968. I could also answer by saying wait a minute. It's not really a *movie* movie. It's a homemade job. A do-it-yourself movie we made out of our garage. That's it. Like a garage band. This is a garage movie. That may bit bean original term of mine. But it certainly fits this little epic of ours.

But it seems a tad more ambitious than that.

Does it? I'm not hip to what is being made out there. When I was a kid it cost about three dollars a minute to shoot on 8mm film. And you had to wait two weeks to get the film back and hope it was okay. Then you cut it with scissors and taped or glued it together. Today, anybody can make a movie at any time with anything. For virtually no money. In only moments really. Its unbelievable. When I was a kid, only a few of us per town were making home made movies. Now only a few of us per town ARENT making movies right?

Guess it begs the question" what makes it special?"

Well yeah. In our case, who knows? I don't think the plot is particularly unique. I know we don't have professional actors and its extremely low-tech. So maybe if someone asked me, I'm not sure how I would answer.

Well I'm asking you.

I don't know. Maybe nothing.

C'mon.

Well maybe I'm hung up on the word "special." Different or unique? You know, I was just saying today I am my own worst critic in no matter what I do. But I like this movie and in spite of the amateurish nature of the entire thing – or maybe in part because of it – it's got merit. I may have – MAY have mind you – a talent for several things. One is pacing, though I'm a lot more Sergio Leone Slow than I will ever be, um, who? - Michael -Bay -fast? I linger, which makes sense to me but I know my audience gets a tad worn out. Not with this film – well maybe with this film - but certainly the last one I made.

What was that?

One Last Stop in a Violent Town. In Pittsburgh. That was a much more personal film really. A sort of Kiss Me Deadly with monsters and masked Mexican wrestlers thrown in. Maybe another talent I have is, gosh, I don't know. Story telling? I do wonder about my combination of silly humor and ugly reality. I go all serious just when the audience gets in the silly mood of the thing. But that isn't a ploy or a gimmick on my part. I don't do a bait and switch. To me its more how I see life. And yes, this film, and others if I made many, would always have a mood like this. Playful. Serious. Playful. Back again.

Are you emulating someone? A particular favorite film maker?

I don't think so but maybe I can't help emulating others. Or is it ripping them off? . I already mentioned Sergio Leone because I like the way he sees comedy mixed with tragedy all in the same situation. I have an homage to my favorite director Akira Kurosawa in it very briefly. Modern filmmakers I admire include Wes Anderson who certainly plays in that arena. His movies play like comedies but can have devastatingly potent dramatic impact. Coen Brothers do comedies where suddenly someone gets shot in the face. Or your favorite character is a total victim. I'm not like them at all I don't think, except when their sentimentality surfaces. I like Alexander Jodorowsky and Ray Harryhausen a lot of the time. I like Robert Bresson and Carl Dryer. Do you know who they are?

No. Hmmm. Are you sentimental? Is Until the Bloody Reign is Over sentimental?

It's a small, simple, almost silly no-budget garage film with no production value, amateur talent before and behind the camera, and little ambition. But it does have heart. I tell you I care passionately about this film. It makes me uncomfortable to talk about it as if its something more than it is. But to me – to

ME – it's a special creation. Not just something that wasn't there before but now is, like a carport or something – but a story, with characters who think and feel, and who have something special in them that they don't want to do but maybe have to do.

That sounds metaphorical and even biographical. Did you do this movie because you wanted to or because you had to?

What a great question. I made it 'cause I wanted to. Or let me rephrase this. I started making it because I wanted to. **WE** wanted to. Me, my sons and their friends. But it became what it is because I needed to, um, elevate the material. Give it some depth and resonance and some meaning. And some monsters.

It is a monster movie right?

Yes.

A horror film?

No. I like some horror films but I don't really know how to make them. Or I don't really have to much desire to make them. Unless I could direct an old episode of **Night Gallery** or something.

Of what?

Night Gallery.

That was a show right?

Yes a TV show in the early 70s and about 25% of the episodes were amazing. But we wanted to make something that would be fun and entertaining on a low budget and I adore old 50s B monsters movies such as Monster of Piedras Blancas AND I wanted something where the kids could be heroes – like the Goonies only something that was actually not offensive (yes I despise that movie)– and have fun with it. So the monsters are in it for the demographic and for the, what? Exploitation factor. And to help make sure that the audience would be entertained. Now why I think a movie suddenly gets more entertaining once there is a monster in it, I don't know. But generally I think it does, don't you.

Well, I'm not sure Casablanca or 12 Years a Slave would be better with monsters in them.

No and probably not Rushmore either. But Streetcar Named Desire, anyone? Or how about Chicago. God knows that film could use a monster or two.

With a musical number?

Maybe. But wait. Avatar had monsters in it and it didn't help there at all.

So tell me about the making of this film.

I remember sitting around the fire with some of my older son Hunter's friends describing this movie we should make. See, they had had an assignment in English where they read Frankenstein and then the assignment was to make a five minute movie inspired by the book. Good god. I'm thinking, "You got to read Frankenstein in school? I never got to do that. And your assignment is to make a movie? God, why wasn't school like this when I was a kid? "

Did they do the assignment? Did you help them?

Well they did the assignment and I butted out because I just couldn't dive in. I would have taken over. But when it was over they said it was kind of fun well THEN I dove on it as an inspiration to a) do something I love to do, b) do something with my kids, and c) well, see a and b.

So did you come up with the plot?

Oh yes well I came up with the basic premise and then as I looked around the campfire I said things like "and you can be this persona, and for you I wrote a special role as a mystic seer, and you..." and it went on like that. So people were about a 7 or 8 on the excitement scale and everyone was handed or took jobs as costumers or proppers, or actors, or make-up and it started out strong. Casting was a bit lumpy but mostly we just kind of randomly asked people and if they said no, we just thought of someone else. One of my failings as an amateur DIY filmmaker is that I am not persnickety enough when it comes to, well casting for sure, but also a lot of other things. Well now if some of the cast, who looked at me as some kind of movie-making Nazi half the time, weren't right, or even if they were right...

So was this a fun experience?

Yes an no. I am jealous of school theater productions that can make kids be there for rehearsals. Can make them know their lines. Can make outrageous demands on the time and effort of these kids and their parents. To do what? The Little Mermaid. I couldn't do that. Or I could have if I would have started out less causally about the whole thing. Next time I will do auditions. That would help.

What was the worst thing about production?

All set for a shoot and nobody is prepared. Not the actors. Not the behind-the-scenes people. It's a lot of work to do something like this and it is more demanding sometimes than fun. What you need to make this type of effort fun is a) a cache of money and b) time. Beyond that, you need people who are so into it, so dedicated, so passionate about eh creative process that everything else goes away.

So time and money would make it better.

Yes. Oh and stunt people and fight coordinators. We can get away with a lot in the dialog scenes. But once the guys in the rubber monster suits show up and the fights commence, the seams really show. We did splurge on a CGI creature at the end and I think it helps. But otherwise you can see we have rubber spears, average kids taking falls, and monsters who look just this side of a good Halloween get-up

I take it you made a lot of compromises.

Oh yeah. But I don't want to sound all negative. Compromises can bring cool surprises too. We lost one of our actors in the process for example and we had to write them out of the script and the scene we wound up with gives the movie some resonance it wouldn't have had before so there you go.

And you're in it too, right.

Oh yes. I was glad to be in it but now I think I am in it too much. I gave myself all the expository dialog as you can tell from the trailer. And what a hypocrite I am. I didn't know my lines very well either.

Well we are anxious to see it.

Well I think I am actually anxious for you to see it. I think if you know what you are going in to see, you will dig it. I hope so anyway.