



INDIE HORROR ROUND-UP: THE CITY (2009), ESCAPE (2010), & DENIZEN (2010)

Posted by *anythinghorror* on June 16, 2010 · [Leave a Comment](#)

Indie Horror Round-Up

The City (2009), Escape (2010), & Denizen (2010)

Welcome to the long-overdue second installment of the Indie Horror Round-Up. This one is a mixed bag ranging from the "cheesily" fun to the dreadfully unwatchable. Let's get to it.

Denizen (2010):



Most plots of indie horror features follow the torture-porn or slasher format. I think it's done out of necessity; these indie productions have very modest budgets and with those story lines they can keep the cast numbers low and use a max of 1-2 locations to shoot. Yeah; its a money thing. But once in a while we get a really ambitious indie project like *Denizen*, which is written, directed, produced, and edited by J.A. Steel (she also did the fight choreography, the stunts, and was the underwater camera operator). *Denizen* shakes off the slasher plot-line in favor of the "creature feature" story and has a cast of 39 actors. That's a fucking lot for an indie feature (Steel even uses military vehicles and a lot of props). But the question is, does she pull it off?

The story is about a creature stalking and killing people in a lakeside town. As the murders get more frequent, the town's scientist (do all towns have scientists??), Dallas Murphy (Jody Mullins) calls on an old friend of his, Sierra Deacon (J.A. Steel) to help stop the creature. The rest of the film, which clocks in at 83 minutes, has the group uncovering the origin of the creature and how

they're all connected to it. The group also has to deal with a rogue Army and their covering up of the creature. Honestly it's all a little confusing. The plot has to do with super soldiers, the fountain of youth, spontaneous human combustion, and the earth's energy grid. But I will tell ya its pretty fun watching it all unfold. Have ya ever seen *Mystery Science Theater 3000*? No? Well stop reading this and get on Netflix and get some episodes. For those of you not living under a rock; *Denizen* would make a PERFECT MST3K episode!! The creature looks like a shaggy Wookiee; the dialogue is hilarious; the story is all over the place; and there are screw ups that were missed in the final edit (i.e., one character wears an eye patch, but in one scene he's talking to Steel's character and his eye patch is up around his forehead like a headband. Both his eyes are clearly visible).

Don't get me wrong; these really aren't complaints. I had a really fun time with this film. This is the epitome of a campy flick. What keeps it from being a "shitty" film is the acting; we get pretty solid performances from the entire cast. There are times when we get some overacting, but nothing that detracts from the overall experience. And how can ya not love dialogue like this:

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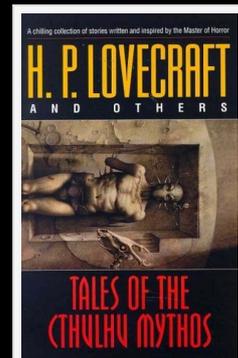
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PICTURE OF THE WEEK

This one may be a bit more difficult.

BOOK OF THE WEEK



Great intro for those not familiar with Lovecraft's works. Check it out; you'll look at horror in a new light!!

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[after filling another character with about 50 bullet holes ...]

The General: Make this look like an accident.

Soldier: An accident? He's got bullet holes all over him.

The General: Yes an accident ... put him in a wood chipper or something.

Love it. Nothing here is meant to be taken seriously and Steel keeps the plot moving at a really nice pace. As Steel wrote to me in an email, "Hope you enjoy this Pizza and Beer slice of B-Movie cheese." She knows she made a campy, fun, "leave you brain at the door" flick. And it works. This won't be for everyone; the production values aren't too great and the sound is at times terrible (one scene had two characters talking outside but they couldn't be heard over a police siren in the background). But if you're looking for some fun cinematic cheese done "indie-style" then you'll enjoy this one. This is perfect to watch with a group of people and a lot of beer.

Director: J.A. Steel (and writer)

Plot: 2.5 out of 5 stars

Gore: 3 out of 10 skulls

Zombie Mayhem: 0 out of 5 brains

Reviewed by Scott Shoyer



Star & director of Denizen, J.A. Steel.

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