

DVD Verdict Review - The Wizard Of Gore

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Appellate Judge Tom Becker was never a wizard, but he sure played a mean pin ball.

A new vision of the original horror classic.

Let's start this one out with a "full disclosure": I don't know that I've seen the 1970 version of **The Wizard of Gore**. I might have. A long time ago, I rented a few Herschell Gordon Lewis movies. I still remember the revolting (yet comical) nipple-cutting scene from (I think) **The Gore Gore Girls** and a beheading (I think) from **Two Thousand Maniacs**, but my overall impression was one of underwhelment. They were badly made and gratuitously yucky movies, with the gore rendered so ineptly that a Furby dipped in marinara sauce was a more disturbing sight.

This remake/update/reimagining of **The Wizard of Gore** gives us trust-fund supported dilettante Ed Bigelow (Kip Pardue, [The Rules of Attraction](#)) becoming fascinated with magician Montag the Magnificent (Crispin Glover, **Nurse Betty**). Montag's act consists of degrading, stripping, and decapitating a different woman (played by various women from the SuicideGirls Web site) at each show. At the end of the show, there's a quick blackout, and when the lights come up, the woman is alive and put back together (still naked, though).

Unfortunately, the women start turning up dead...killed the same way they'd been killed onstage. And Ed, who self-publishes a news gazette, wants to find out why. But as Ed investigates, strange things start happening. He's plagued by dreams that cast him as the killer. He's remembering things that other people claim never happened and forgetting things that others remember.

What is happening to Ed...and to the world around him?

Good luck figuring it out. While **The Wizard of Gore** gets high marks for style, it is frustratingly thin on substance.

The Wizard of Gore looks great, a neon neo-noir nightmare. Ed Bigelow dresses and lives like he is a '60s private eye (at one point admonishing someone for bringing a DVD to his apartment, since there is obviously no DVD player there, just a round-screen black-and-white TV and a dial phone). There are some nicely understated and unsettling hallucino effects as well, and the killings are gruesome as the day is long.

The acting is very good, particularly Kip Pardue and Crispin Glover, who has a good time acting demented. Joshua John Miller and Bijou Phillips are fine in supporting roles as friends of Bigelow. Besides Glover, we get turns from Jeffrey Combs ([Re-Animator](#)) and Brad Dourif ([Child's Play](#)), making this a kind of spot-the-geek-stars must-have.

The film starts out as an intriguing mystery. Who is Montag? What strange power does he hold? What draws Bigelow in? How involved is he? Is he the only one who sees what is happening here, or is he the insane one?

The problem is, when the film sets out to answer these questions, it pretty much derails. The solution to the mystery is so convoluted, it's like the writer made it up on the spot. It ultimately boils down to two things that should never share billing in any film: drugs and semantics. We're also given a bunch of long-winded backtracking speeches to explain it, with references to things that hadn't seemed that important earlier in the movie, and by the time everything is laid out, it's more of a cheat than a revelation.

Great disc from Dimension Extreme: good transfer and audio, lots of extras, including a commentary with the filmmakers, a "Behind the Scenes" featurette, a look at the SuicideGirls, and deleted scenes, some of which are surprisingly entertaining.

If great visuals, naked SuicideGirls, graphic violence, and the Glover-Combs-Dourif combo are your thing, snatch this one up. If cohesive storytelling is a vital part of your movie enjoyment, then pass on this.