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FILM REVIEW - SKINNED DEEP

by Richard J. Schellbach

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Director: Gabe Bartalos
Writer: Gabe Bartalos
Stars: Karoline Brandt, Warwick Davis, Liz Little, Jay Dugre, Kurt Carley, Aaron Simms, Forrest J. Ackerman
Running Time: 97 minutes



When I was in my late teens and early twenties, my friends and I made a habit of going to the drive-in on the weekends.. at least till the winter snows came. Not the big multi-screen drive-ins that still dot the country. I mean the good ol' single screen drive-ins that used to show two or three features on a Friday and Saturday night. Most times those features were horror movies and most times they were perfect drive-in fare. It took a special kind of movie to be a drive-in flick. *Star Wars* was not – *Zombie* was. *Logan's Run* was not – *The Hills Have Eyes* was. *Soylent Green* may have been people but a drive-in flick, it was not – *The Bat People*, on the other hand, was. But in the last dozen years, those great drive-ins of old have all but disappeared and, sadly, so have all of those extremely unique drive-in movies. With rare exceptions (*Frankenhooker*, *Tremors*, *Pumpkinhead*) the past twenty years have not been kind to drive-in movie fanatics. The films once produced solely for the drive-in circuit are now being sent straight to video... and it's not the same. A half-assed infomercial can keep me glued to my couch for an hour. But the kind of films that kept me in my car for hours on end, listening through a tinny speaker while headlights reflected off of the movie screen have pretty much gone the way of the dodo.

That is, until now.

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Skinned Deep makes me wish there were still drive-ins in every small town in the United States.

Skinned Deep starts off much like dozens of horror films have, since 1932's *The Old Dark House*. A vehicle, loaded with travelers – the Rockwell family, in this case - breaks down on a deserted road. Phil, the dad, hikes down the road to find help, while mother, Gloria Jean, stays behind with their two kids;

Matthew and Tina. After finding a sweet old lady, named Granny, who tells him that her grandson works on cars and could help them out in a jiffy, Phil goes back to the van, lets the family in on the good news and, together, they take a short walk to Granny's house. In the scant seconds it takes them to get there, I have already decided that I want the obnoxious Gloria Jean to die in the most painful way known to man.

As I watch for the next few minutes, "*Kill her before she speaks again!*" becomes my mantra and I chant it, ad nauseum, like a raving lunatic.

Once inside the house, the Rockwell family is introduced to Granny's kin; the Surgeon General, Plates (played to the hilt by **Warwick Davis**) and Brain - a group who makes the Manson clan look like the Cleavers. Now, I'm not going to get spoiler-heavy here, but suffice it to say that minutes after the two families meet, there's no need to keep that mantra thing going anymore.



The next 80-odd minutes are chockfull of high octane, balls-to-the-wall weirdness - the likes of which you probably haven't seen in years. It's slimy, whacky, over-the-top, insane and funny, – sometimes all at the same time. There is no grey area here. You are either going to love or you're going to hate this film. **Skinned Deep** has the subtlety of a fist fuck and makes no apologies for it.

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As with many low budget films, the acting, at times, leaves much to be desired. But **Christopher Seguire's** manic editing style, Atlantic West's terrific makeup effects, **Al Magliochetti's** in-your-face visual effects and the fresh, "fuck y'all" directing style of Gabe Bartalos are among *Skinned Deep's* many highlights. So, by the way, is the Surgeon General – a franchise character if ever there was one. Do I hear *Skinned Deeper* anyone?



If you weren't able to catch *Skinned Deep* on the big screen, pick up the DVD in May, mount the video projector on top of your car, paint the garage door white, grab a few cold ones and watch *Skinned Deep* the way it should be watched – outdoors with the lights off.

Advertisement

The advertisement features a DVD cover for the movie 'darkness'. The cover is dark with the title 'darkness' in a red, lowercase font. Below the title are the names of the lead actors: Anna Paquin, Lena Olin, and Iain Glen. At the bottom of the cover, it says 'On DVD April 26 Play'. A red banner at the bottom right of the cover reads 'UNRATED VERSION'. The cover art shows a close-up of a woman's face, likely Anna Paquin, with a dark, moody atmosphere. In the top right corner of the advertisement, there is a small copyright notice: ©BVHE.