

The Woolamalloo Gazette

Far finer was the low-budget horror *Skinned Deep* by Gabriel Bartalos. Made over a fair old length of time by Gabe and a bunch of friends whenever they had the time and the money this is, at it's heart, an old-fashioned horror of the type I adored back in the original video boom of the early 80s, before asshole MP David Alton rode the popular tabloid folk devil of 'evil video nasty made kids kill' sensationalism to censor them into extinction. The all-American suburban family on holiday driving across the land break down in rural America. Now all of us know that this is trouble because Rural America is full of cannibalistic, chainsaw-wielding in-bred families (this may be part of the classical rural-urban binary opposition mythology, except in Missouri where it's all true) and so will end in tears. The ultra-sweet old lady who runs the local diner – how lovely and polite, if a little backward. Come back to her home for dinner? *ARE YOU CRAZY?!?!?! Of course our nice family are and soon we are being introduced to her family – Brain (dungarees wearing hick with, well giant brain; Plates (a plate-throwing deadly dwarf!) and the Surgeon General with his huge metal jaws. And an oldster gang of Hell's Angels called the Ancient Ones who get involved later on (including SF fan legend Forrest J. 'Forrey' Ackerman).*



Yep, it doesn't take itself too seriously – this is a labour of love. Gruesome and mutilating love perhaps, but love nonetheless. It's the proper old horror which actually has HORROR in it, as opposed to the toothless 'horror' films we've been fed by Hollywood studios masquerading as 'independents' and giving us post-modernist, slick films which pretend to be horror but are barely thrillers and so tame to those of us who grew up watching *I Spit on Your Grave*, *Cannibal Ferox*, *The Hills Have Eyes* etc (and grew up to hardly mass-murder anyone at all, thank you Mr Alton – gee, think maybe it wasn't the movies which twisted us kids?). Made by begging, borrowing or stealing this is a hugely fun film, following in the fine footsteps of Sam Raimi, both in some filmic touches but also in the way it was made (Sam working with friends, selling his car to raise money etc) or Romero when he made *Night of the Living Dead* (give me some money and you can be a zombie!). Take the word of an old gore hound – those of you who loved *Evil Dead* and the others of its ilk will love this. Horror and humour well mixed and with plenty of nods to other films and to the dedicated horror audience.

Better was to come though. There was a Q&A afterwards, as is common in the Film Fest. Gabe regaled the audience in the lovely Cameo cinema with tales of how the film came together over a couple of years (the branding session at the start is apparently real) and how the actor playing Brain didn't hold it against him when they shot the scene of him streaking down a busy New York street. Alas, as underground movie-makers they had no film permit, they just drove to a location, quick shoot, grab him back in the truck and off to the next. Except as he streaked along one street he was nicked by the local coppers and hucked off to the clink! Trust me, if you only see one movie with an inbred, murderous hick with a giant external brain streaking joyously down a NY street, make it *Skinned Deep*. I joined a few others and the very friendly and extremely approachable Gabe in the Cameo bar afterwards and had a good old chat with him. He's a lovely bloke who basically has the philosophy of making the film you want to see yourself, not one which will 'make your name' or whatever, which I respect enormously. He's worked with Tom Savini and a host of others (including Warwick 'Willow' Davis who stars as Plates – a wonderfully funny but nasty camp turn played straight). No British distribution deal yet, so you'll have to watch for film fests around the country to have a chance of seeing it. Hopefully it will get a deal and a DVD release – it deserves to be a cult hit. There is a section on the film on this [website here](#).