



Film should fade away

The psychotic main character Eric Binford, played by Dennis Christopher.

Review: 'Fade to Black'

"Fade to Black," the latest in the series of movies about pervert killers, should fade to obscurity.

Vernon Zimmerman actually accepts credit (maybe punishment) for writing and directing this movie. It's hard to tell whether his direction is any good, because his script is so bad. All his characters are shallow, worthless and deserve what they get.

His plot is weak, and his dialogue is spastic.

Our psychotic wonder is Eric Binford, played by Dennis Christopher who does a good job of acting like a wimp, even though his James Cagney imitations sound like Jerry Lewis. Binford is an emotionally disturbed movie buff who's seen "Dracula" one too many times. Incapable of supporting himself, he lives with an invalid who nags and mistreats him.

Guess who Binford's first victim is.

And he kills using famous murder scenes from, of course, movies. Binford's guardian pushes him too far, so he returns the favor and shoves her down the stairs like the crippled woman in "Kiss of Death," an old Richard Widmark movie.

But Eric is basically a good boy, so what started his little distorted mind rolling? He meets a Marilyn Monroe lookalike played by Australian Linda Kerridge, who apparently is not only new to American cinema, but also to acting. Or maybe she's seen too many dumb blonde movies. Binford absolutely idolizes both the dead Monroe and the cheap substitute, who for some dumb reason, decides to go to a movie with him, even though it obvious from their first meeting he's not sane.

When she forgets her date with him, Binford makes her life miserable, but she's too dumb to even know it.

Even the good guys lack any normal human intelligence and emotions. There's a macho social worker named (honestly) Dr. Moriarty, played by Tim Thomerson. When he isn't fooling around with a police-woman, he's making idiotic remarks like, "There's something strange about that Eric Binford."

Now, "Fade to Black" is supposed to be scary — a la "Terror Train" or "Friday the 13th" — the kind of film in which audiences love to scare themselves not waiting to see WHO the next victim of The Evil Thing is, but HOW he dies. The scariest thing in this film is a "Halloween" movie poster tacked on an office wall.

But then again, "Fade to Black" could all be a joke like "Motel Hell," which was a funny exploitation film. Maybe we're supposed to laugh when the police act like the Keystone Kops. Maybe Zimmerman is trying to comment on the phony glitter of Hollywood, and the frivolity of being young, stupid and blonde. Maybe "Fade to Black" is a warning of what happens to emotionally insecure persons who get too much California smog.

But "Fade to Black" is so bad that I seriously doubt whether even Eric Binford would waste his time watching this film.



Linda Kerridge, who stars as a Marilyn Monroe look-alike.

-KATHLEEN MCELROY

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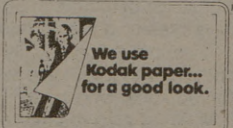
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