

GRINDHOUSE

THE CULT FILM WEBZINE

Men Behind The Sun (1987)

Director: T.F. Mous

Reviewed by Winslow Leach

COOL QUOTE: "To the empire! BANZAI!!!"



THE REVIEW: I've heard a lot of things about **Men Behind The Sun** from various people, mostly that its really gory and really disgusting. On the DVD cover it states the film is "In the tradition of Faces of Death", so I knew what I'd be seeing would push the limits of nastiness. Yet while watching it, I never expected it to be totally funny and over the top as well. Its based on true events that took place during World War II in China during Japan's occupation. The story in the film takes place at one of the main camps which was used for medical experiments on the Chinese citizens the Japanese called "Marutas". While Hitler's SS experimented on innocent Jews, The Japanese had their own evil experiments going on with things like Bubonic Plague infected rats and fleas and other ideas to help them kills the enemy.



The 731 Squadron/Youth Corps (made up of pre-teens mostly) are slowly learning to cruel ways of their leaders at the medical/jail/camp. The kids are given strict rules and if they disobey they will be executed. One night, a few of the students go into the off limits grounds to look around. There they find a room full of rats and after being startled, they fall down into the bunch of crazed rodents, the kids freak out and barely make it out of there without being rat food. One of the kids gets caught, then tries to run away, he climbs up the snowy hill, when he accidentally gets killed by coming in contact with the electrical fence. The Youth Corps are really the subplot of the film, the real attraction is the outrageously disgusting ways The Japanese experiment their new weapons on the innocent Chinese.

Dr Ishi is the leader of the camp and he is a ruthless guy. While he leads his men and they trust him, they are also fearful of him and find him strange. When you see Dr Ishi drink a cup of fresh urine (taken from one of his men) with an eerie pride, you'll see this isn't any ordinary guy. The 731 bring in the Murata's for more experiments. They take one young lady and her baby aside, the baby loudly cries while they step on the woman's arms. As the baby continues to cry, they quickly kick snow on it to muffle the cries. When one of the soldiers says they shouldn't waste the baby because of the experiments, the other says he wont be wasted because he'll be stuffed and put in a jar later.



The 731 are becoming even more cruel in their methods of "experimentation". They take one of the female Muratas outside into the cold and tie her to a frozen barricade covered in ice. Then, they proceed to pour ice cold water on her arms. After 10 hours of this, her arms have succumb to frostbite (they're black). When they take her inside again, they have her dip her blackened frostbitten arms into a vat of hot water. When she pulls them out, one of the guards pulls the rubbery flesh off her arms off revealing her bones. Then, if that wasn't enough, another Murata's arms are completely frozen and the doctor taps them with a large stick as the man cries out in pain as pieces of his icy flesh break off. When you see these scenes you wont be able to take it seriously, its so gruesome and outrageous to the eye you will find yourself laughing.

One of the most disturbing sequences in a film full of disturbing sequences is when the Japanese place a real cat in the room with the rabid rats. The rats proceed to rip the cat to pieces. The cat shrieks while the rats squeal and eat his flesh and it is very hard to watch. The cat becomes a bloody-half dead meal for the rats. Dr Ishi and the others look on, while the others find it sickening, Dr Ishi proclaims his pride at the scene. He compares the group of little rats killing the cat to his Youth Corp taking on the enemy forces. He wants every one of them to be the best and to overcome the odds.

There's plenty of nastiness for any gorehound out there in this film. You'll see bodies being blown up, a mother and son being gassed to death, and one of the nastiest torture sequences I've seen in a movie where a man is put in a sound chamber and the noise is cranked up so loud that the decibals squeeze his intestines out of his rectum. The most disturbing sequence I found in the film was the live body dissection. It has to be seen to be believed. You may need a barf bag for that one. Near the end of the film, there's also a really well done action sequence, in which some of the Muratas who are tied to poles escape from the Japanese briefly. The action is well staged and it becomes more of a 'Missing in Action' type film for a few minutes, which gives you a slight break from the film's extensive experimental torture motif.

After Dr Ishi receives word that the Russians have joined the Americans in their fight against them he explains that 731 Squadron and the base must be destroyed, they cannot leave any evidence for the enemy forces to find. He also claims that all the medical technicians and soldiers must commit suicide so their secrets wont get into the enemies hands. After a discussion with the other heads of the 731, they convince Ishi that they should try to survive and go back to Japan. For security measures they will all carry bottles of cyanide, if they are to be captured then they will drink it and die. The 731 is then destroyed, all files burnt and the Muratas that are still in jail are set on fire in a mass grave. A very harrowing look at the lengths the Japanese went to, to win a war.

This film is a Chinese movie made by Chinese to seem Japanese. The mixture creates a really funny atmosphere. The overdubbing also definitely adds an over the top humor to the film, which was probably a big part of why I found it funny. This film could be compared to the Ilsa: She Wolf of the SS films in that they both explore similar subject matter, evil medical experimentation and torture. The pacing of the film was well done too and that's probably one of the main reasons I enjoyed watching it. There weren't really any dull spots throughout the entire film.

THE DVD

REGION: 1

STUDIO: World Video/CAV

FILM SPECS: Presented in (1:85:1) Widescreen. Picture is clear, some slight graininess throughout, but it adds to the overall Exploitation feel. Colors are vivid and bright. Dubbed.

EXTRAS: Theatrical trailer, Film Information, Director Interview (text) with TF Mous, Director Filmography, Movie Previews.

AUDIO: Chinese, English (Dolby Digital 5.1). Sound is sharp and is clear. You'll hear every scream, shriek, laugh and heavy breath perfectly.

THE FINAL WORD: Men Behind The Sun totally surprised me. I wasn't expecting such a crazy, wild film mixed with dark comedy and gore based on true events. The film may be really disgusting and gory in scenes, but it also highly entertaining, filled with action and humor albeit pitch black. I highly recommend this film to hardcore Grindhouse-Exploitation fans, there's no way you will watch this and not be interested in every sickening minute of it. NOT FOR THE SQUEAMISH!