

Blue Sunshine

USA | 1976 | 90 minutes

Credits

Director	Jeff Lieberman
Screenplay	Jeff Lieberman
Photography	Don Knight
Music	Charles Gross

Cast

Jerry Zipkin	Zalman King
Alicia Sweeney	Deborah Winters
Edward Flemming	Mark Goddard
David Blume	Robert Walden

In Brief

Several former college students find their former drug experiences catching up with them in an unexpected and terrifying manner in this clever horror outing. Jerry Zipkin (Zalman King) is a bright but troubled man in his late twenties who graduated from Stanford University in 1968 but hasn't had much luck getting his life in order since then. One night Jerry attends a party with a few old college buddies, and is shocked when one of them, Frannie (Richard Crystal), suddenly loses all his hair in a single lump and goes on a bloody rampage. When circumstantial evidence makes Jerry a key suspect in the murders of three women at the party, he sets out to find out what happened, and with the help of another school friend, surgeon David Blume (Robert Walden), he discovers a link between Frannie's bizarre behavior and several similar incidents which recently occurred. In each case, the killers attended Stanford in the late '60s, and all had used Blue Sunshine, a potent but tainted variety of LSD sold by Ed Flemming (Mark Goddard), a bootleg acid chemist who is now a respected mainstream political candidate. Jerry struggles to stay one step ahead of the law as he tries to piece the story together, knowing that another victim of the drug could go insane at any moment. Mark Deming, All Movie Guide

Blue Sunshine is a rarity amongst low budget features in the sense that it stubbornly refuses to accept any kind of simple categorisation. After delighting drive-in moviegoers everywhere with the worm-infested monster flick *Squirm*, Jeff Lieberman chose to follow that success with a movie which is assembled from ideas borrowed from many unlikely sources. Straight horror, satirical drug movies, the 60s counterculture movement, paranoid urban legends and even post-Watergate conspiracy theories; Blue Sunshine touches upon them all. But despite all that, Blue Sunshine is more fondly remembered for it's bald, thirty-something, ex-hippie murderers who are easily the most bizarre descendants of the living dead yet to reach the silver screen.

The title of this movie is taken from the name of a bad batch of 60s acid that seems to have some rather unfortunate long-term side effects. These kick in a decade later, manifesting themselves gradually at first with only a slight sensitivity to loud noise and a bit of hair loss. However, the effects soon magnify out of control. With their biological make-up terminally unbalanced the unfortunate victims soon turn from respectable members of society into raging homicidal maniacs. The uncontrollable and irreversible nature of this transformation is horrifying to say the least; it appears no one who took the accursed drug is safe from the repercussions.

And let's be frank here; the implications of such a disturbing yet wild premise are bound to set even the most unimaginative of minds racing.

But in many ways, the movie Blue Sunshine is simply a product of its time. In America, the 60s saw an explosion of youthful idealism, but the advent of events such as the Vietnam War and Watergate soon saw an end to that. As the 60s counterculture dissolved back into the capitalist reality of the 70s there must have been a sense of failure amongst the flower power generation. That concept is strongly implied here. Ultimately, Blue Sunshine feels like an analogy for the problems a society encounters when it faces the consequences of it's own actions.

With that in mind, it should come as no surprise for you to find out that it's only respectable representatives of authority who are going insane from the effects of the aforementioned drug. In the end a policeman, a babysitter and even a politician have to individually accept their horrible fates. This touch of satirical irony was a wise move on Lieberman's part as it allowed him to stretch the traditional boundaries of taste one would expect from a movie of this time. A policeman killing his wife is sad but nothing to write home about, but to see a babysitter loose it and attempt to kill two children in her care is quite disturbing. Even more so, I've never before seen anyone stuffed alive into a fireplace and I doubt I will ever again.

Blue Sunshine's well-developed sense of irony is also apparent again later on in one of its most memorable scenes. Lieberman chose a discotheque to be the unlikely setting for one bald maniac's rampage (they don't like loud noise, you see) followed shortly after by a jaunt through a shopping mall. It's worth noting as well that Blue Sunshine predates *Dawn of the Dead* by over two



Blue Sunshine

Did you ever hear the words

BLUE SUNSHINE



Try to remember...your life may depend on it.

BLUE SUNSHINE, Written and Directed by Jeff Lieberman starring Zalmon King, Deborah Winters / Mark Goddard / Robert Walden / Charles Siebert / Ann Cooper Ray Young / Guest Stars Alice Ghostley and Stefan Gierosch. Produced by George Manasse, Executive Producers Edgar Lansbury & Joseph Beruh. **TR RESTRICTED** Distributed by Cinema Shares International Distribution Corporation.

Writer-director Jeff Lieberman has crafted a handful of highly quirky, creative, and distinctive horror movies that are much enjoyed and appreciated by fans of offbeat and imaginative fright-film fare. His pictures are distinguished by their novel oddball plots and an amusingly eccentric sense of off-center humor.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1947, Lieberman attended the School of Visual Arts in New York City. Lieberman's first film credit was co-writing the script for the gritty police action thriller *Blade* (1973), which was directed by his mentor Ernest Pintoff. Lieberman made his debut as a writer-director with the excellent and inspired revolt-of-nature killer-worm outing *Squirm* (1976). He followed this substantial drive-in hit with his best and most beloved film to date, *Blue Sunshine* (1976), which tells the extremely absorbing and original tale of a bunch of hippies who take a lethal form of LSD that causes them to lose their hair and become insane psychotics 10 years afterward. Lieberman's entry in the popular early-1980s wackos-in-the-woods slasher sub-genre was the potent and harrowing "*Deliverance*" (1972) variant *Just Before Dawn* (1981). *Remote Control* (1988) was a hugely entertaining science-fiction alien invasion romp that Lieberman himself considers to be his worst feature.

After a regrettably lengthy absence from directing, Lieberman made a triumphant return to fabulously

freaky form with the enormously fun-n-funky psycho hoot *Satan's Little Helper* (2004). In addition to his own pictures, he also penned the screenplays for the TV movie *Doctor Franken* (1980) (TV)—which he also co-directed—and *Neverending Story III: Return to Fantasia* (1994). He also produced and directed TV commercials throughout his career.

IMDb Mini Biography By: woodyanders

years, suggesting Romero wasn't the only one who thought consumerism was a subject ripe for satirising.

But like most low-budget efforts, *Blue Sunshine* does have its shortcomings.

For a start, I struggled to sympathise with Zalmon King's overly twitchy hero and it's no surprise that he only starred in a couple of movies before moving behind the camera. There he was much more successful, going on to direct a string of soft porn 'classics' such as the *Red Shoe Diaries*, *Two Moon Junction* and *Wild Orchid*.

Also, and as I stated before, *Blue Sunshine* is clearly a product of its time. Shooting badly lit, bland scenes with overly wide lenses was popular in the 70s, as was using experimental music to provide the score and Lieberman was suckered into both. The result instantly dates the movie more than it deserves. It is however not too much of a burden since thankfully Lieberman is a much better screenwriter than he is a director and the strength of his script tends to make up for his failings as a filmmaker.

I'm sure that with more time and money this movie could have been much more polished and the intricacies of the screenplay explored more thoroughly, but what we do have is well worth a look all the same. The conspicuous lack of gore and nudity may deter some viewers, especially those of you who prefer the tits and ass Slasher flicks of the early 80s. But given some time and a little thought, you might just find that *Blue Sunshine* rewards your patience by delivering a movie that is both satisfying and thought provoking. Either way it's certainly a movie that's hard to forget in a hurry and I urge you to give it the same chance I did.

Review from www.eatmybrains.com



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