

# THE HORROR ZINE

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## The Horror Zine Review

### PIG

#### A Film by Henry Barrial

#### Review by Scott Urban

**Director:** Henry Barrial  
**Actors:** Rudolf Martin, Heather Ankeny, Keith Diamond  
**Studio:** A Mark Stolaroff Production  
**Format:** HD, 1.78:1 aspect ratio  
**Language:** English, some German  
**Release Date:** April 2011 at film festivals  
**Run Time:** 89 min

Some movies you settle in to watch with no more expectation other than that they will provide a visual distraction while you stuff your face with buttery popcorn. There's nothing wrong with that; I'm an ardent devotee of Z-grade movies you can throw your popcorn at.

But sooner or later, your cinematic palate craves something a bit more substantial—something along the lines of Nolan's *Memento*, del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth*, or Gondry's *The Science of Sleep*; something that demands you sit up, put the greasy bucket down, and freakin' *pay attention*. These directors deliberately play with your expectations: they lead you down one road, and viewers anticipate the plot will play out one way (because it always has *before*)—and then *whiplash*—they introduce a twist out of left field that feels as if the director has smacked you a good one upside the noggin.

The major studios haven't released anything along the latter lines so far this year, so thank heaven for writer/director Henry Barrial, who fills the void with *Pig*.

In *Pig*, The Man (played by Rudolf Martin) comes back to consciousness with a black hood over his head and his hands zip-tied behind his back. He discovers he's in the middle of the desert. The Man finds a sharp-edged rock and uses it to laboriously cut through the zip-tie, which looks like a painful process I never want to go through myself. Thirsty, stumbling, he tries to find his way back to civilization. He pulls a wadded-up piece of paper out of his pocket on which is written the name 'Manny Elder.' Is *he* Manny Elder, or is it the name of his would be executioner?

Shortly thereafter, The Man finds himself in the care of Isabelle (played by Heather Ankeny) and her young son Papo. Isabelle helps bring him back to health and offers him emotional support. Her husband was killed by the police because he ran drugs, so there's room for The Man in her life.

For The Man, unexpected and shocking glimpses of his past frighten and disorient him. He can't stop wondering what sort of connection he might have to the enigmatic Manny Elder. Finally he decides he has to travel to Los Angeles in a last-ditch odyssey to follow up the one slim clue he has to revealing his past.



While yes, it's true, a protagonist with amnesia could be one of those clichéd plot devices we've seen perhaps too often; this film manages to be different. There actually is something else at work in *Pig*. The conclusion, when it arrives, is dramatic, satisfying, and could even warrant a second viewing to see how the pieces of the puzzle fit in place.

Rudolf Martin's acting is truly outstanding in this film. I have seen and can recommend his earlier feature, the cult favorite *Dark Prince*, about the early life of Vlad Tepes/Dracula. And in *Pig*, his performance is just as good.

Martin has the unenviable task of portraying a man without context, a man who has no solid facts about his past. As he pursues his quest, he is increasingly unsettled and disturbed by what he finds out about himself. To put yourself in his shoes, you would have to imagine a friend describing a heinous crime and then accusing you of being the culprit—and you having no memory of it.

Heather Ankeny is also commendable in her role as the slightly mysterious Isabelle, and the viewer has to wonder: if she was married to someone else before—why does she have a photograph of The Man?

*Pig* benefits from having its inception in an actual news story Barrial read about the CIA imprisonment of a German citizen of Lebanese descent who, after having been held in captivity for six months, is 'renditioned' to Albania. The suspect, who was no more a terrorist than Barack Obama, found himself bound and blindfolded in a country where he couldn't even speak the language. When he finally arrived back home, he discovered his wife had despaired of ever seeing him again and had started her life over again elsewhere. Barrial began to wonder: what if someone in the United States were placed in that position? What would that person's reaction be?

*Pig* has already been an official selection of the Nashville Film Festival (April 2011) and was awarded the title of 'best feature film' of the London International Festival of Science Fiction and Fantastic Film.

And there is good reason for its film festival success. Barrial's *Pig* is a thoughtful meditation on consciousness and *being*, developed as a suspenseful search for self. Consider for a moment: what is it that makes you, *you*? Is it your physical appearance? Is it the contents of your mind? How much do your friends and family members know the *real* you?

Highly recommended, *Pig* will have you considering these and other ramifications long after the credits have rolled. Keep an eye out for this one, because it deserves to appear in a theater near you.

