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Posted: Tue., Jun. 16, 2009, 5:41pm PT

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Hole in the Head Fest

Morgue Story

(Brazil)

By DENNIS HARVEY

A Vigor Mortis presentation. Produced by Viviane Follador. Executive producer, Bina Zanette. Directed, written, edited by Paulo Biscaia Filho, based on his play.

With: Leandro Daniel Colombo, Mariana Zanette, Anderson Faganello, Wagner Correa, Edson Bueno, Carolina Fauquemont.

A comicbook artist, a coroner and a life insurance salesman walk into a bar ... triggering a macabre "Morgue Story." Though its gimmicky, verbose, mostly one-location progress sometimes betrays the stage origins of director-scenarist-editor Paulo Biscaia Filho's debut feature, this Brazilian bad-taste comedy is ingenious enough to please as a farcical Grand Guignol for sophisticated horror fans. Future looks bright for niche smallscreen sales, and for Filho in general.

Steeped in genre in-jokes, the script has nerdy Dr. Torres (Leandro Daniel Colombo) frequently about to do something inappropriate with one of his "corpses" on the morgue slab when they suddenly wake up. This can occur as a result of deceptive cataleptic seizure (experienced by Anderson Faganello's hapless nice-guy insurer), or the perv doc's drugging of strangers like Mariana Zanette's punky graphic-novel creator. Pic risks curdling the fun by overemphasizing threatened rape of both the dead and merely unconscious. But mostly, it provides giddy laughs as present-tense morgue doings and flashbacks-within-flashbacks (one involving voodoo-raised Haitian zombies) grow ever more cartoonishly convoluted. Perfs and packaging alike are delightfully honed.

Camera (B&W/color, HD-to-DV), Alexander De Marco; music, Demian Garcia; production designer, Fabio Allon. Reviewed at Another Hole in the Head, San Francisco, June 10, 2009. Original title: Morgue Story: Sangue baiacu e quadrinhos. Running time: 78 MIN.

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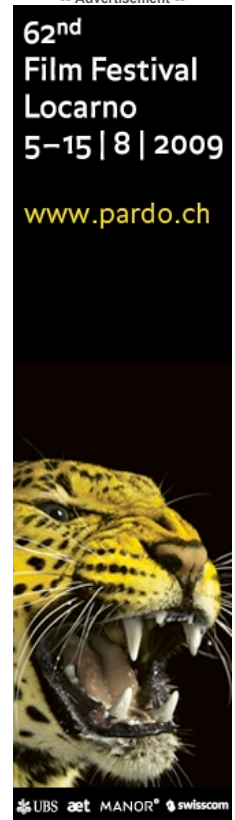
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