

Blu-Ray Review: ‘The Midnight Meat Train’ Delivers the Gory Goods

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 19, 2009 - 6:15pm

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CHICAGO – The world of horror movie distribution is seriously messed up. Millions are allowed to flock to junk like “[Saw V](#) [15],” “[The Eye](#) [16],” and “[The Unborn](#) [17]” as they play on thousands of screens, but a lot of the best genre movies for 2008, which was actually a very good year for horror, were barely released. Believe it or not, “[The Midnight Meat Train](#) [12]” was one of the best.

I’m sure a lot of readers find it hard to fathom that a movie called “The Midnight Meat Train” is worth their time, but that’s one of the things I love about it. You know *exactly* what to expect from a movie like “The Midnight Meat Train”. It’s not a mysterious title like “[Cloverfield](#) [18]” or even “[The Strangers](#) [19]”. This is “The Midnight Meat Train”. Gird your loins and get on board.



The Midnight Meat Train was released on Blu-Ray on February 17th, 2009.
Photo credit: Lionsgate

Leon Kauffman ([Bradley Cooper](#) [3]) is a struggling photographer who has been told repeatedly that he needs to push himself farther to get the gritty, urban shots he’s reaching for with his art. By strolling subway platforms looking for the underbelly of the city, Leon stumbles across Mahogany ([Vinnie Jones](#) [13]), a serial killer with a mallet and a hook who waits for the final train of the night and commits vicious, bloody murder.





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Photo credit: Lionsgate

The photographer finds himself both disgusted and intrigued by the silent Mahogany. He wants to stop him but he also wants to get that amazing shot. It's easy to read the plot as a commentary on the horror genre in general - one that produces thrills by showing us the pain of others.

Leon goes deeper and deeper into Mahogany's world and discovers that this is not your ordinary killer. The final act of "Midnight Meat Train" goes where most horror movies aren't willing to go - completely off the rails and the unconventional climax is probably what scared Lionsgate out of giving the film a wide theatrical release. Horror fans will find and love "MMT". It's a cult movie just waiting to find its audience.

Clive Barker has often been a tricky author to adapt to the big screen. Personally, I'm a big fan of a lot of his writing, but I think he has a surreal sensibility that fits literature or the graphic novel form better than the literal world of cinema. Barker deals with complex issues like lust, madness, and evil that can't really be interpreted literally.

And that's why "The Midnight Meat Train" works. The great Japanese director Ryuhei Kitamura (who made the awesome "Versus," a movie you really need to see if you haven't) was the perfect fit for Barker. Kitamura brings an over-the-top, gore-filled, foreign twist to the Barker vision that simply rocks.

Some viewers have complained that "MMT" is too over-the-top with its excessive gore. In one beautifully conceived, brutally twisted scene, Kitamura films a POV shot of a woman getting her head knocked off and seeing her body lying in the train car. THIS is Clive Barker. It *should* be cartoon-ish. It's called "Midnight Meat Train". Every popping eye and blood-splattered train window blends together to create an almost graphic novel-esque style that fits perfectly.



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Photo credit: Lionsgate

As much as I loved the style and tone of "Midnight Meat Train," the dialogue is pretty weak. Another pass by a better writer would have made this a truly great film.

And while casting Vinnie Jones as the villain was pure genius, I'm not sure the typically good Bradley Cooper was as much. He's good with the emotional stuff, which most horror actors aren't, but some of the physical stuff seems wrong for him. The final conflict, in particular, looks almost uncomfortable for the actor with some stiff stage combat.

"The Midnight Meat Train" looks and sounds great on Blu-Ray with a 1080p 2.35:1 presentation that's good and a 7.1 DTS Master HD Audio track that is one of the best horror audio mixes in a long time. "MMT" is a movie meant to be played loud.

The special features for "MMT" are good too with a great, honest, interesting commentary track by Barker and Kitamura that details both a lot of the studio problems with the film and their general satisfaction with the final product. The commentary is excellent, but the special features are just okay with "Clive Barker: The Man Behind the Myth," "Anatomy of a Murder Scene," and "Mahogany's Tale" all running a little short.

A surprisingly effective and stylish horror movie with nearly perfect video and audio and a fantastic commentary by one of the literary masters of the form - "Midnight Meat Train" is the horror Blu-Ray of the year to date.

'The Midnight Meat Train' is released by Lionsgate Home Video and stars Bradley Cooper, Leslie Bibb, Brooke Shields, Roger Bart, and Vinnie Jones. It was written by Jeff Buhler and directed by Ryuhei Kitamura. It was released on February 17th, 2009. It is rated R.



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