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# Zap! It's 'The Devil's Cleavage'

By Christine Nieland

If TV's Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman had been written and directed by the same folks who gave us Zap comics, the result might have been something like George Kuchar's film, "The Devil's Cleavage."

Kuchar may be one of the all-time experts at imitating lousy Hollywood movies. His "Cleavage," being screened at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Film Center of the Art Institute, is a three-part soap opera packed with exaggerated cliches from every B-movie in memory.

Grotesquely made-up housewives pant lustfully in their backyards and doorways, in hopes of seducing each other's husbands. We see shootings, stranglings, seductions, deser-

tions and much assorted luridness.

The plot follows the fortunes of Ginger the visiting nurse, who dumps artificial vomit on her patients' floors as a revenge against all the cleaning up after them she has been forced to do.

Ginger's good-for-nothing Hawaiian husband deserts her, and she takes up with a fellow named Frank whose old girl friend now lives with a New Orleans playboy. We know he's a playboy by the paper hat he wears all the time.

Meanwhile, one of Ginger's neighbors drugs a sexy looking plumber, drags him into the bedroom and rips his clothes off. But she is deterred by the shrieks of her invalid mother, whom she presently beats up

with a bedpan.

Meanwhile, the plumber wakes up, steals the housewife's wallet and goes to meet his girl friend, Stella. By the way, this fellow is so sensuous that every time someone passes, they can't resist the temptation to rip his undershirt.

UNFORTUNATELY, "The Devil's Cleavage" looks a lot funnier on paper than it does on film. For one thing, Kuchar makes no concessions to technical competence. The dialog is scratchily recorded, while the black-and-white visuals are harsh and ugly.

Secondly, once we get the idea, we realize that we're laughing at a one-joke movie. The level of parody remains consistent, which is to say the

film never really tops itself. When you've seen one of Kuchar's grotesque housewives, you've seen them all.

"The Devil's Cleavage" does serve as a remarkable example of how a bad movie can be sustained by a series of cliches. Ginger's nonstory actually forms a plot. We assume certain traits in the characters, not because the traits are dramatically established, but because we are conditioned by the cliches defining those traits.

Kuchar and his twin brother Mike have been dealing in imitation Hollywood schlock since the 1950s. Titles of their films include "The Naked and the Nude," "I Was a Teenage Rumpot" and "Corruption of the Damned."