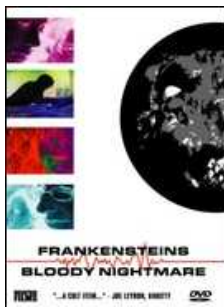


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Case Number 11648: Small Claims Court



## Frankensteins Bloody Nightmare

[Unearthed Films](#) // 2006 // 77 Minutes // Not Rated  
Reviewed by Appellate Judge Tom Becker (Retired) // July 6th, 2007

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### Scales of Justice

Judgment: 66

### Perp Profile

Studio: [Unearthed Films](#)

#### Video Formats:

- Full Frame

#### Audio Formats:

- Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround (English)
- Dolby Digital 2.0 Stereo (English)

#### Subtitles:

- None

Running Time: 77 Minutes

Release Year: 2006

MPAA Rating: Not Rated

#### Genres:

- [Horror](#)
- [Independent](#)

### All Rise...

Judge Tom Becker doesn't know from bloody nightmares, but he can whip up a mean Bloody Mary.



### Distinguishing Marks

- Commentary by John R. Hand
- Making of (12:45)
- Stills
- Trailers

### The Charge

Look! It's moving. It's alive. It's alive! It's alive, it's moving, it's alive, it's alive, it's alive, it's alive, it's alive, it's alive!!

### Accomplices

- [IMDb](#)

### The Case

OK, the above line is from the 1931 classic [Frankenstein](#). It is not uttered in **Frankensteins** [sic] **Bloody Nightmare**, at least as far as I could decipher from the soundtrack, but then this movie has very little to do with the **Frankenstein** story. There is a nightmare sequence, but it's more gooey than bloody. The film might just as well have been called **Rocky Balboas** [sic] **Bloody Nightmare** or **Frankenstein: Pig in the City**.

What we have here is an experiment, a proudly cheap little project that one person wrote, directed, starred in, shot, scored, edited, and so on. That person is one John R. Hand, a twentysomething fellow from Florida, and this is his only screen credit. Mr. Hand is ambitious, resourceful, and creative—but has he made a movie worth seeing? Well, that depends on just what kind of movie you want to see.

Hand shot **Frankensteins Bloody Nightmare** on video and Super-8 film, using a variety of filters and low-budget effects. Virtually all audio was post-dubbed, and the dialogue does not always "synch up" particularly well. The words "grainy" and "oversaturated" apply to both the look of the film and the soundtrack, but not necessarily in a bad way. Visually, the film has a poetic quality, and its roughness has a distinct charm, as do the non-dialogue parts of the soundtrack. It's both surreal and headache-inducing, a seemingly abstract collage of images and sounds with just enough narrative structure to create a semblance of plot.

And here is where the experiment falters, big time. Hand may have a story to tell that goes with these images, but damned it I could figure it out just by watching the movie. After listening to the commentary, watching the "Making of" feature, and reading anything I could find on the Web, here's what I came up with: Young Dr. Victor Karlstein (Hand) runs some kind of clinic/research center. His father and grandfather had run the business, and he inherited it, along with

long-time assistant Andrew Milligan (homage alert). Victor's girlfriend, Victoria Vermillion (Amy Olivastro), is dying, possibly because of something Victor did or did not do. She dies. There are some murders, both before and after her death, because Victor needs body parts to reanimate his love (even though she's still technically animated when the murders commence). There's a guy with head that looks like cauliflower gone bad who is actually a burn victim who carries out Victor's bidding. And the people at the clinic seem to be plotting against Victor. And Victoria's sister, Tara (also Olivastro), visits. And...

And this is what sucks about the movie. It's not only that it's incomprehensible, it's that anything involving characters, plot, or dialogue is just amateurishly bad. I don't mean Ed Wood bad or Ray Dennis Steckler bad, I mean your 16-year-old nephew with a video camera bad. Half the dialogue is unintelligible; as for the other half, you'll wish it was unintelligible. Plot points are introduced, then randomly discarded.

John R. Hand may be many things, but an actor Hand is not, nor is he a particularly engaging presence. Since everything in the film revolves around his character, this adds a significantly unwelcome layer of pretension. In general, I found Hand to be kind of irritating, which made the extras something of a hard sell, because they are all Hand, all the time. First is the aforementioned "Making of," which is just a talking Hand, along with some outtakes. Hand prattles on for 12-plus minutes about his philosophies on filmmaking and life in general. He's not exactly inarticulate, but he does seem quite full of himself in an undergraduate kind of way. Then there's the commentary, in which Hand (who is too close to the microphone, and at times has a noticeable and unfortunate post-nasal drip) gives us a blow-by-blow of not only what we are seeing, but what he would like us to see; this is necessary, since you won't get it from the acting or action. This is possibly the only DVD where I would recommend listening to the commentary before watching the movie.

In the commentary, Hand does explain the title, which is a riff on/homage to a Paul Naschy film, **Frankenstein's Bloody Terror**. Hand references a lot of other filmmakers, including Jess Franco, Joe D'Amato, David Lynch, and Andrei Tarkovsky. Ironically, he doesn't mention Guy Maddin. At times, the look of **Frankensteins Bloody Nightmare** reminded me of [The Saddest Music in the World](#), but since **Music** also had wit, irony, characterization, memorable performances, a plot, and moments of genuine brilliance, the similarities ended there.

The film is presented full frame, which is pretty much the perfect format for this; the images would be wiped out in a widescreen presentation. If you're watching this as a kind of trippy party DVD, the 5.1 Surround option adds a nice texture to the soundtrack.

Perhaps if Hand the producer, director, editor, cinematographer, and composer had been working with someone other than Hand the actor and Hand the writer, this project might have come off as something more than an interesting-looking vanity production. As it is, it's more like an admirable effort of a student film stretched out to feature length; at 77 minutes, it is too long by half. If you are looking for a horror movie, steer clear of this one; if experimental cinema, no matter how self-indulgent, is more to your liking, you might want to at least give this one a rental.

In the "Making of" feature, Hand discusses the concept and making of **Frankensteins Bloody Nightmare**: "It's like peeling an onion, there's nothing inside, it's just this empty core...but you've got this beautiful wrapping." While Hand is clearly better suited to filmmaking than farming, I pretty much agree with the metaphor. Not every film has to have a linear structure, but **Frankensteins Bloody Nightmare** is all style with no anchor.

**Frankensteins Bloody Nightmare** is ordered sent back to the lab for some retuning, while John R. Hand is ordered into a work-release program where he will study plot, structure, and characterization, and take a subordinate role in a professional project. Mr. Hand's ego, however, is to be locked up in solitary confinement. Please join me in throwing away the key.

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