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Shock Festival by Stephen Romano, Idea and Design Works, 2008

J. Rocky Colavito

Butler University, jcolavit@butler.edu

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Recommended Readings



Shock Festival

by Stephen Romano, Idea and Design Works 2008

Reviewed by J. Rocky Colavito

Remember classic grindhouse fare like *Day of the Insects*, *The Undertaker and his Wife*, or *Chocolate Cherri on Top*? Are you a secret fan of Z-listers like Roc Benson, Gloria Johnson, or Natalie Ustinov?

Don't worry if these titles and names don't ring bells, for they are all figments of the beautifully demented mind of Stephen Romano, who, along with a cast of several, celebrates the aforementioned and others in the spectacularly over-the-top and gloriously fictional *Shock Festival*.

Part coffee table book, part homage to poster art, part cinema schlock retrospective, and all made up, the book presents lavish and glowing tribute to figments of Romano and others' fertile imaginations, each inspired by all-nite grindhouse fare of the sixties and seventies. It's all there: blaxploitation, badly-dubbed, retitled Eurolease, mainstream blockbuster rip-offs, red-neck road rampage; the authors don't miss a one.

The posters are eye-poppingly accurate riffs on the genre; the profiles of the principals, though fictional, are arresting and reflect the interview-driven reporting of cinema studies. It's a sure conversation starter, and an inspiration to revisit some of those real guilty pleasures of the grindhouse past.

To make things all the better, you can review Romano's artwork at <http://www.shockfestival.net>, and, if this isn't enough, the end of the book indicates the upcoming availability of a DVD collection of trailers for many of the films that inspired the fertile minds of Romano and his co-conspirators. You have been warned . . .

- J. Rocky Colavito is professor of English and Director of Writing Programs at Butler University.