

# ZOMBIECON VOL.1

 1/2  
 based on a 5-point scale

ZombieCON Vol 1 is a recent independent horror film, both written and directed by Kyle Valle, featuring a cast of emerging actors. The film presents a unique blend of horror and comedy set within the sphere of cosplay and fan expos, an unconventional premise that proves unexpectedly effective for its intended audience. I will admit that initially, I cringed a bit early in the film because it does perpetuate stereotypes that can be derogatory to the community. However, the personification of these stereotypes ended up being endearing rather than having to endure, and, in short order, I found this to be charming and funny, even if a bit overcooked at times.



The narrative follows a group of friends and cosplay enthusiasts who collaborate to outperform their rivals at a convention. After their victory and a bit of gamesmanship, they encounter a homeless individual, receive a peculiar rock, and interact with some rather unpleasant individuals at a local convenience store. Subsequently, one of our heroes, following an internal conflict in the group, makes a wish on the stone for all "assholes" to become zombies, thus initiating the main events of the movie.



Throughout the film, there is a clear sense of appreciation for the "nerd community," exploring themes of camaraderie among those often-considered outsiders. While the story does not aspire to the heights of genre-defining classics such as *The Goonies* or *Stand By Me* in its mixture of coming-of-age drama, teenage/early adult relationships, and dark themes, it delivers a coherent and authentic portrayal of growth and hits all the right marks with regards to conversation and conflict between friends. Dialogue, though occasionally uneven or verbose, generally succeeds in fostering empathy for the central characters, positioning them as underdogs within broader society, though within their kingdom, they reign supreme. I'd like to point out the performances of Erin Aine as Claire and Punkie Johnson as, ironically, Punkie as the two standouts here, bringing emotional depth and a lot of humor to the events. A mention is also deserved by Carlo Mendez, the leader of the enemy cosplay group, who hams it up as the film's villain in a way fitting of both the subject matter and the film's approach to such.

From a technical perspective, cinematography is commendable given the limitations of the budget; some scenes are notably underlit, potentially as a creative choice to conceal production constraints. The special effects are executed effectively and contribute positively to the overall viewing experience. Although there is a sequence late in the third act that I found to be too flamboyant in its use of CGI and too heavy-handed with one character's development. In the end, I enjoyed my time with this film and am happy that I paid the low price to purchase it on Amazon Prime.

Campy, corny, funny, and hilariously bloody, *ZombieCON Vol 1* is a fun time for anyone with ties to the con or cosplay world. Approach it at its altitude and you'll find an enjoyable and smooth flight.

