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*NetherBeast Incorporated*

Written by **Bruce Dellis**; Directed and Edited by **Dean Matthew Ronalds**  
**Kevin Berman**, Executive Producer  
**Ronalds Brothers Films**

Screened April 18, 2007 – Phoenix Film Festival

It has been a pleasure to watch an idea move from germination to creation. *NetherBeast Incorporated* has moved from a concept to a short to a feature length film, all with Arizona as its home base. The initial short film was a creative, twisted piece written by **Bruce Dellis** and directed by **Dean Matthew Ronalds**. The subsequent feature film retained its original production team but has brought in a collection of recognizable performers to fill the roles within the story of a collective of the undead including **Darrell Hammond**, **Judd Nelson**, **Dave Foley**, **Steve Burns**, **Amy Davidson**, and a small but integral appearance by the Ronalds' frequently-used star **Robert Wagner**. I'm happy to report that the writing of this feature is just as creative and twisted as the short and does an excellent job of building a larger back-story to support it. However, in expanding the film and incorporating a much larger cast, the inequalities of talent have brought down the overall production and some of the pitfalls of independent filmmaking have

hindered the quality. This is a smart and funny piece that talks a great game, but lacks some visual and performance panache.

Dellis' storyline centers on the mysterious Berm-Tech Industries. This centuries-old corporation is a cover for a collective of misunderstood NetherBeasts, vampires who have found a way to live among humans peacefully and profitably. When one of the top execs goes haywire and invites outsiders into the closed ranks while longtime members begin to disappear, the middle managers must band together to solve the mystery and return stability to the company. A stretched-but-necessary flashback involving President Garfield and Alexander Graham Bell explains the creation of Berm-Tech and other integral bits of information.

The best part of this film is its quirky charm. Dellis comes up with some wonderful oddities both in describing the "truths" versus the "myths" of the undead and in creating characters with eccentricities that are dealt with in a matter-of-fact way that makes their inclusion all the funnier. A large collection of VO'd animated sequences fills us in on background material and is professional in look and writing. One of my favorite character quirks involves Davidson's sweet interloper Pearl; brought in to replace a staked co-worker, she is a living outsider who has a thing for ventriloquist dummies.

But this is an independent film, and some of the technical elements betray this. Ronalds is inconsistent in his framing and images. Sometimes he comes up with brilliant visual jokes, such as an ongoing one involving a stuffed dog. Others are rudimentary and static, such as his scenes between Davidson and Burns in a local bar. The sound quality and mixing have moments lacking balance. His editing, though, is more consistent and full of nuance.

The same problems run through the performances. Burns and Davidson play the romantic couple very well, and Hammond is his usual sardonic self, making his persona work for the character of the off-kilter boss. Foley successfully plays a middle manager tasked with figuring out this mystery with a straight face and distracted air. Nelson, however, appears uncomfortable as the other outsider, a consultant brought in to assess the corporate structure. Especially in the climactic scenes, he seems to walk through some potentially hilarious moments. Wagner is only involved in one setup, all of which involves him lying in a bed. His cameo may be short, but he is effective in the scenes.

The trade-offs of technical and performance limitations balanced with a top-notch indie-style script and some strongly directed visual moments may doom this feature to a limited release, but hopefully it will establish itself in the festival circuit and become a jumping off project for its talented writer and director.