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CANADA'S PREMIER MAGAZINE

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# Note from Underground

"For my part I am concerned with cutting into and examining the still warm corpse of history itself. In some of my chilliest moments I suspect that this was [Jack the Ripper's] foremost pre-occupation also, albeit in pursuit of different ends."

-Alan Moore/From Hell

Once, in answer to an interview question, I remarked that horror has nothing to do with murder. As in actual murder. As in people actually killing other people. The interviewer gave me a wry grin as if to say, "how is that possible?" I'm going to get really technical at this point, but it's a technicality worth making, especially as it comes to bear on the topic at hand. Horror has nothing to do with murder. Actually, horror has nothing to do with death either. It does, however, have everything to do with the concepts of murder and death. Still with me?

Of course, anyone who disagrees would really only need to reference the case of Jack the Ripper, who killed five prostitutes in Whitechapel, London late in the 1800s, and whose deeds found echoes in a plethora of horror movies, books, comic books and plays ever since. Despite the grisly and meticulous accounting and recounting of everything humanly known and related to the Whitechapel murders, very little is known about Jack the Ripper himself. No one knows why, in the last day of August 1888, he was driven to viciously murder a 42-year-old prostitute named Mary Ann Nichols. No one knows why, three months and as many more killings later, on November 9, he slaughtered Mary Jane Kelly - another prostitute - in the most grisly manner imaginable, before vanishing into the night forever.

Who was Jack the Ripper? Historians and so-called Ripperologists never tire of going over the suspects, the theories, the psychological profiles and the open guesses - both educated and outlandish. Still, no one knows much about Jack the Ripper. In fact, the entire body of known facts can be whittled down to a few key points: he was probably a man. He used a knife. He wrote at least one letter to the police. He used the words "From Hell" as a return address.

Despite this, or maybe because of it, Jack has become much more than what we know of him. Writers, playwrights and grim hobbyists have filled in the blanks by rearranging (sometimes ignoring) the scanty facts to recreate London's fog filled streets and the inner mind of a killer. Thanks to them, the image of the Ripper - face shrouded in shadow, steely knife glinting in the moonlight - has become a classic icon of a collective fear.

So yes, Jack the Ripper was an actual murder and his deeds have inspired a lot of people to write horror and make horror movies, but the fact that none of those stories actually try to solve the murder ought to tell you something. It's not about the murder. When Alan Moore wrote *From Hell* (in which the Ripper is dispatched by the Queen to cover up a Royal slip-up) and Harlan Ellison wrote *Prowler in the City at the Edge of the World* (in which Jack gets transported into a mechanical city by the bored children of the future), neither was trying to throw light on the case. They were dancing with the devil in the pale moonlight, that's all.

It's generally believed that speculation about Jack the Ripper has included doctors, women, Freemasons and members in the highest ranks of British government, but that's not entirely true. Most of these people are not actually suspects so much as fictional frameworks for persons other than the one who killed five prostitutes in Whitechapel circa 1888. Entertainment is the goal, not investigation. That's the difference between being a writer and being a Ripperologist.

I'm not trying to say that speculation about who or what Jack the Ripper really was is not something worth pursuing - it is, but it's not nearly as important as the mythology of Jack the Ripper: Jack as a ghost, as the personification of hatred, as the civil intellectual, as the Boogymon himself. In other words, Jack as a concept but never as an actual person.

It's probably best that we never know who Jack the Ripper really was. Why? Because it's no longer important. In a way, it never was. Not for the writers and the filmmakers at any rate. Horror stories have their own ends and Jack - not the real Jack but the Jack we tirelessly reinvent - is the one who will always keep us coming back.

-RC

rod@rue-morgue.com



Canada's Finest Horror Magazine

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# POST MORTEM

QUESTIONS · COMMENTS · CRITICISM

## RM Loves NY

What a surprise to receive a personal letter from my favourite mag! I subscribed at Chiller-Con after picking up your mag from the newsstands for over a year. Hands down, you guys are the best horror magazine out there. Where other mags spend pages on one or two bloody scenes in the current drivel that is Hollywood movies, you guys cover the spectrum. You have introduced me, via review or feature, to countless great videos and soundtracks. You don't spend too much time on a single title, but rather spotlight one or two gems, then get down to business critiquing the wealth of stuff being released and re-released. Well, I could go on, but I think you get my point. If you weren't all a way up in Canada, I'd come give you a hug personally!

Rob  
Lockdown New York

## From The Web Ring

In your recent issue, in the letters column, someone asked about getting his hands on the Ring DVD. Well, I am not sure about the Japanese version, but at the website: [www.pokemindustries.com](http://www.pokemindustries.com), you can get an import, all region Korean remake of Ring. They carry only original DVDs, no bootlegs, and are based in the US. I have bought numerous HK horror and action DVDs from them, and have had no problems, and their prices are very reasonable, most coming in around \$17 dollars or so. And as to how the Korean Ring stacks up against the Japanese, well they are both equally amazing, with the Korean version being more slick but just as freaky and scary and amazing... I hope this info helps readers looking for this kick ass movie. Naughty nights.

J. Jeon Jr  
Minneapolis MN

## RM Needs More Psychobilly

Howdy, spooky Canadian types. Just wanted to say "gracias" to Greg Chant & RM for the nice review of Blood Sweat & Nitro in the last issue. We appreciate it. For the record, I've got nothing against Goh! Metal, but you guys do seem to



## R.I.P.

### Issue #22 July/August 2001

get more than your share of it... I just figured you might appreciate something a little different, a musical sorbet to cleanse the proverbial palate. Love the magazine, can't wait for the next one. Could use more Spectres though.

Cheers & Beers,  
JJJ/The Spectres

More Spectres? That sounds like a good idea. Mose on over to page 86

## Early Midnight Syndicate

I read your article on Midnight Syndicate in RM #22, and loved it. There may be one correction, though. Midnight Syndicate came out with a CD in 1997 titled *Midnight Syndicate*. Are the two guys forgetting about that venture because it is another cool CD. The only CD I do not own is the latest, but I will have it soon. Their music is great to escape into. I do envision that I am in a forest filled with dense fog and not knowing what lies ahead. Anyway, I just wanted to pass on this information. Take it easy and I enjoy RM. Douglas Baccosky  
Willoughby OH

## Back Issues

I just wanted to say thank you for your INSANELY quick response time regarding back issues. I ordered every magazine available, twelve in total, and received them in about three weeks! Your magazine is superb as is your customer service. Many thanks and keep up the good work.

Chris Bruce  
Milford MA  
P.S. Thanks also for the RM sticker you included with my order. A very pleasant bonus!

## A Haunted Letter

Recently a friend told me about your magazine so I walked over to the nearby cigar shop/newsstand and picked up a copy I have to say I was very impressed. I read the magazine from cover to cover that evening and enjoyed every article I read. What I really enjoyed about your mag is that you have a bit of everything for the haunted industry. You have a great magazine, keep up the good work.

Doug Rickert  
Green Bay, WI

## Two Girls and a Werewolf

I won passes to see Ginger Snaps by entering a contest in your magazine. Well, I am very grateful. Not only was this the best horror movie in recent memory, it is also proof positive that quality genre films are still being made north of the border. The study of werewolf transformation has not been this impressive on screen since David Naughton made his trip to London.

François Labelle  
Ottawa ON

## LETTERS POLICY

We encourage readers to send their comments via mail or e-mail. Letters may be edited for length and/or content. Please send to [info@rue-morgue.com](mailto:info@rue-morgue.com) or:

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# Dreadlines.

News Highlights  Honor Happenings

## Godfathers of Gore reunite for Blood Feast 2

The Godfathers of Gore are back in business. After a twenty-five year-plus absence from the film industry, Herschell Gordon Lewis, along with his long-time film partner David Friedman, have at long last returned to tackle the sequel to their 1963 splatter classic *Blood Feast*, which has the distinguished claim of being the first gore film ever. The bigger budgeted sequel is titled *Blood Feast 2: All U Can Eat*, and Lewis is promising a gore fest like none seen before.

"*Blood Feast 2* carries the concept of splatter movies to a totally outrageous new level," the 72-year-old cult icon told *Rue Morgue* from the Louisiana set. "I suspect, that, even competing with major company product, we are going to be able to startle, enrage, titillate and certainly entertain a 21st century type of audience. We have a scene in which the eyeballs are scooped out, and I guarantee you, I don't care how much anybody has seen on the screen, they have not seen something like this."

Director Lewis and executive producer Friedman began filming in late July with Queso Grande Productions and *Rue Morgue* was fortunate enough to catch them in the midst of it all. Needless to say, both gore masters are ecstatic to be back in the business of blood.

Says Friedman. "Herschell asked me would I like to do it and I said, 'just for the pleasure of working with you again, I'd love to do it.' So here we are, down in the bayous of Louisiana, fighting the gators and moccasins and various and sundry characters!"

Lewis admitted that he also had trouble resisting the lure of the film industry.

"The motion picture business is something like malaria," he said. "You think you're cured, but it's always there in your blood

waiting to flare up."

And flare up it has, into a full-fledged professional production, as Lewis says, with "a beautiful Panavision camera, equipment and procedures that simply did not exist when we made the original *Blood Feast* with department store mannequins.

"We've got quite a heavy crew here," he added. "I used to be the director and the cinematographer, so this is quite a luxury to be able to stand around or sit in the chair and say, 'yes, go ahead' to my assistant director."

"It's quite a more, let us say, well-produced film," pipes in Friedman. "The locations are authentic, and the acting is certainly a cut above the original. But we hope to keep the flavour of the original more than anything else."

For *Blood Feast 2*, the grandson of Fuad Ramses (J.P. Delahoussaye) returns to the original scene of the crime to reopen his grandfather's catering business. And just like his granddaddy, Fuad Ramses III has cultivated an obsession with the goddess Ishtar, though his is somewhat more intense. In a parallel storyline, he walks in the macabre footsteps of his grandfather by dismembering young ladies to make the ultimate feast for the goddess. In homage to Lewis, John Waters (*Pink Flamingos*) will make a cameo appearance and Friedman is hoping that Waters will also agree to narrate the trailer.

We won't have to wait long to find out more gore-ious details - *Blood Feast 2* is



*Bloody Mayhem: A classic scene from H.G. Lewis and David Friedman's original Blood Feast*

expected to hit theatres January 2002. Lewis and Friedman are also shooting for a sneak peak at Chiller Theatre in New Jersey this October, where they plan to show a few excerpts from the film. Also expect more from Lewis, Friedman and *BFF* producer Jacky Morgan in the future.

In the meantime, the gory duo are languishing in the glory of their revived film careers.

"I love it and I really love being back in this position with a new generation and a new respectability," Lewis gushed before he rang off, while Friedman trumpeted, "Gory Gory Hallelujah!"

For the full menu on *Blood Feast 2*, check out [www.bloodfeast2.net](http://www.bloodfeast2.net) and stay tuned for more of Lewis' blood in future issues of *Rue Morgue*.

-Mary-Beth Hollyer

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## Halloween: The Homecoming delayed to 2002



*Homecoming Halloween 5 Cast and crew pose before the rebuilt Myers house.*

The upcoming eighth installment in the *Halloween* series, *Halloween: The Homecoming* is experiencing a delay despite a favourable shoot earlier this year. Plans for a late September/early October premiere have been put on hold until further notice.

Rue Morgue had a chance to catch up with producer Malek Akkad during a break from the long hours in the editing suite prior to the news release. Though obviously tired, Akkad was not slow to tell us that filming in Canada was a success.

"The shoot was great, Vancouver was wonderful, everything went really smoothly," he exclaimed. "Surprisingly, there were no major catastrophes."

Akkad describes the upcoming film as being "totally fresh for the franchise, while not veering too far away from what everyone loves," and he says he expects it to be a major installment in the series and to breathe new life into it.

Of note is that Akkad, along with *Halloween II* director Rick Rosenthal have opted to update the story of Michael Myers to include elements from the Internet and real-life *Blair Witch* style cinematography.

The movie follows a group of young kids who are doing a major webcast from the Myers home. Each one is hooked up with a camera and the live feeds are being broadcast over the internet.

"The new story gave us a lot of opportunity for covering the stuff in a new way,"

said Akkad. "We obviously will have the standard film angles and we also have these video POVs on each of the actors which gives it a totally new look and a heightened reality in one sense. We also have these POVs where Michael Myers is actually following the characters so you share the POVs of the victim and so it totally brings in a whole new element."

Of course, with a franchise as time-honoured and as minimalist as *Halloween*, new has proved to be less than a good thing in most of the sequels. Anyone with an ounce of doubt about that particular statement is encouraged to log on to any of the thousands of Halloween internet fan sites which exist for the sole purpose of discussing, praising and/or criticizing the franchise's every move. They are also not afraid to voice their opinions and ideas as to where the storyline should be taken and why.

Says Akkad: "They're always a barometer. We realized that the diehards are one segment of the audience that we don't always take into consideration that it's the entire audience. You have the fanatics who know absolutely everything about the series, it's almost frightening how much they know. You want to keep them happy and give them something that they will enjoy but without neglecting the other huge portion of the audience, like couples and teenagers and everybody else."

Nevertheless, Akkad revealed that, in an effort to recapture the feel of the original *Halloween*, plans were taken to incorporate details that only the fans would recognize. To that end, the Myers house was rebuilt brick by brick in its entirety in Vancouver, in a departure from some of the other sequels in which a different house was used.

"The house really shows," said Akkad, "it's almost like another character in the film. As simple as it is, everyone remembers it and it's the very opening image of the entire series."

Akkad also revealed that substantial energies were spent in making sure the Myers mask resembled the original as closely as

possible. Though the crew did not return to the William Shatner mask (as was done in *Halloween*), they did work from the moldings used in the original movie.

*Halloween: The Homecoming* promises to be a significant entry if only because Michael finally fulfills the quest he embarked on so many Halloweens ago: to kill his sister Laurie Strode, once again played by Jamie Lee Curtis, possibly for the last time.

"Never say never," chuckles Akkad. "You gotta remember there's part thirteen to look forward to!"

Look for the complete transcript of our interview with Malek Akkad closer to the film's opening date.

In other *Halloween* news, Chaos! Comics continues to push its own version of the *Halloween* story with the upcoming *Halloween III: The Devil's Eyes* which sees Tommy Doyle back from Smith's Grove for a final confrontation with The Shape. Phil Nutman returns again to write *Halloween III* which is expected to land in comic shops on October 10.

-Rod Gudino



*The Devil's Eyes: Now this Halloween from Chaos! Comics ongoing series*

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# Dreadlines.

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[www.wesbeniscotter.com](http://www.wesbeniscotter.com)

Maybe you haven't heard of artist Wes Benscoter, but you sure as hell have seen his demented CD artwork in the Audio Drome (Regurgitate's Carnivorous Erection in *RMV22*). A must-see, Benscoter's artwork and website is, literally, stunning.

[www.fusionreviews.com](http://www.fusionreviews.com)

A labour of love and blood, containing a sprinkling of this and that from the horror genre – movie and music reviews, message board, club and even restaurant reviews.

[www.icehouse.net/cultcuts](http://www.icehouse.net/cultcuts)

Short on looks, big on brains, Cut Cuts provides a panoramic view of international horror films (i.e. anything not made in the USA). The site includes insightful essays on EuroHorror and a huge review section with movie stills and in-depth coverage, thankfully organized in alphabetical order.

[www.evilclownanimation.com](http://www.evilclownanimation.com)

Watch for this cult-classic presently in the making as animator Mike Dobson and a slew of talented individuals introduce you to Siobhan, a sexy immortal female warrior slaying her way through evil. Carnage is sure to satisfy fans of violent, twisted animation. Spike and Mike are you listening?

[www.carfax-abbey.com](http://www.carfax-abbey.com)

Based in the UK, Carfax Abbey provides a horror movie database similar to the Internet Movie Database. Films, credits and summaries are listed, and readers are invited to post their reviews. The site also offers neat little sections such as AKA, where you'll find all those alternate titles for your favourite and not-so-favourite horror flicks.

compiled by Mary-Beth Hollyer

Get a website suggestion?

E-mail a link to: [mbh@rue-morgue.com](mailto:mbh@rue-morgue.com)



Writer/director Wes Craven and his creation, among the many celebs to be featured in *Scream* television's Fall programming schedule.

## "Comprehensive treatment" for Canada's Scream TV

The veil is up, Canada's first digital access horror channel will be premiering the first week of September. We gave you the beads up on this story in our last issue (Dreadlines – *RMV22*), but have since secured some tasty details we thought our Canadian readers especially might like to know.

"We're doing a pretty comprehensive treatment of the horror genre," Lori Rosenberg, General Manager for *Scream TV* told *Rue Morgue*. Rosenberg revealed that the channel will be set up in a series of original segments which will cover movies ranging the gamut from classic to contemporary. Approximately three quarters of *Scream's* programming will be comprised of time-honoured titles like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, genre staples like *The Omen* and more modern fare like John Carpenter's *In The Mouth of Madness*.

"We've also got a few series peppering the schedule, including *Millennium*, *Twin Peaks*, *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* and *Friday the 13th: The Series*," Rosenberg said.

Some of the confirmed slots you can look forward to include *Exhumed*, which will feature the best of vintage horror tales, another called *Flatline*, which will feature contemporary thrillers every night at 9 p.m., and a tongue-in-cheek segment called *The Dead Ventriloquist*, which will feature introductions by an animated puppet talking to a corpse.

Rosenberg also noted that, currently, there are plans to air only one in-house production, called *The Screaming Room*, which is being developed as a platform for interviews

with key players in the industry, be they on-camera talent or craftspeople in departments such as special effects, makeup and scriptwriting.

"The Screaming Room is a response to what we were hearing from a lot of fans of the genre who said that they wanted to see what was going on behind-the-scenes," commented Rosenberg. "We've also got a bit of campy fun in there with the top ten scary movies of all time, the top ten scary monsters, and the top ten stupid things people say in horror movies."

What you probably won't be seeing on *Scream TV* are any entries in the rape/revenge canon of schlock movies or those slasher films which sprinkle liberal doses of violence with sexual content. Although the channel has already shown signs of taking their job as Canada's only horror channel seriously (with acquisitions like Dario Argento's *Suspiria* and the original *Nightmare on Elm Street*), Rosenberg says *Scream* will adhere 100 percent to the broadcasting codes imposed by the Canadian Association of Broadcasters and the CBCS.

"We'll adhere to all the codes including the violence code," she said, "and that basically negates any sexual degradation toward women and any of those issues. I don't see us censoring films; I just see us steering clear of any movies that would potentially get us close to that line."

Canadian residents can access *Scream TV* by calling their local cable company or satellite provider and subscribing directly.

-Rod Gudino



and



Ask...

# "WHAT'S IN A NAME?"



## Are you critical of the movie titles chosen by film executives?

Well, here's your chance to pen alternate names for some canny cult classics from MGM Home Entertainment's Midnight Movies Collection.

The person who submits the most creative "re-titles" will win a horror DVD collection of their own!

Choose three out of the eight films listed below and rename them:

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THE THING WITH TWO HEADS • THE PIT & THE PENDULUM  
DR. COLDFOOT AND THE BIKINI MACHINE

### FIRST PLACE

One winner will receive a Halloween DVD display containing 12 MGM thrillers, including the titles above plus Special Editions of *The Silence Of The Lambs*, *Hannibal*, *Carrie* and *Dressed To Kill*.

### RUNNERS-UP

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# What's Brooding...

with *Vulnavia Wick*

**AND NOW... THE EXORCIST 4** Production on the prequel to *The Exorcist* is set to begin this fall and will span the globe from the US and UK to Africa. John Frankenheimer (*The Manchurian Candidate*, *Rosin*, *Seven Days in May*) will direct, but no other details about the cast or crew are forthcoming yet. Frankenheimer joined the production after reading a script by Caleb Carr, author of *The Alienist*. The prequel will recount Father Merrin's first meeting with Satan as a missionary in Africa during World War II.

**A NEW DAWN** Beacon Communications recently convinced Richard P. Rubinstein, producer of the original *Dawn of the Dead*, to embark on a remake of the George Romero classic. Rubinstein owns the rights to the original film and said he agreed to proceed with the remake because of Beacon's "strong commitment to giving the remake competitive production values." James Gunn, scriptwriter for Warner Bros.' *Scooby Doo* movie, will pen the script, which inci-

dentally has many fans at alt.horror up in arms. Gunn began his career writing low budget horror films (*Tromeo and Juliet*) and is excited by the prospect of working on *Dawn*: "It combines my two all-time favourite things, flesh-eating zombies and shopping," he said.

## WILD THINGS RESURFACES

Universal Films is currently developing an animated feature based on the children's classic *Where the Wild Things Are*. The book followed the adventures of a child named Max on his visit to a land of monsters. At the time of writing, former Disney animator Eric Goldberg was in negotiations to direct the computer animated film. Playtone Productions, the company owned by Tom Hanks and Gary Goetzman, will produce, along with author Maurice Sendak and John B. Carls of Wild Things Productions.

**DRACULA THE THEME PARK** In an effort to revitalize its ailing tourism industry, the Romanian government has announced plans to embark on the development of *Dracula Land*, a "terror" theme park to be situated in Sighisoara, Transylvania, the home town of Vlad the Impaler. Westerstadt Pullman City, a German company, will likely design, build and operate *Dracula Land*. The company also operates a *Wild West in America* theme park in Germany. The park itself will ring in at approximately \$24 million Canadian. Officials are aiming to open *Dracula Land* in 2003.

**GINGER SNAPS AGAIN** TVA International recently announced that they will be releasing a special edition *Ginger Snaps* DVD exclusively in Canada. The DVD will be jam-packed with extras including feature commentary from director John Fawcett and writer Karen Walton, 25 minutes of deleted scenes with commentary, auditions, rehearsals, a spotlight on the creation of the werewolf, a featurette, trailers and more. "Even though it is a very expensive project for an 'Available in Canada Only' DVD, we feel that with the extensive theatrical campaign TVA did, along with the coast to coast rave reviews, this DVD will be a major Canadian DVD success story," said Howard Rabkin, creator of the DVD.

**FRIDAY FANS ROAST RUE MORGUE** The folks who pass through the *Friday* the 13th message board were up in arms this past July about the negative review of the yet-to-be-released *Jason X* in *RM* #22. "Let's anally electrocute [Rue Morgue's staff]," said one irate Friday fan. Comments on the board ranged from "fuck Rue Morgue" to "I agree. Fuck Rue Morgue." Jim Issac, *Jason X*'s director, also got in on the roasting, saying that the magazine's staff did not see the final cut with "the real sound track, the real effects and the final mix," and therefore, could not judge the merits of the film. But, of course, there were a few who were a bit more philosophical about the review: "The first of many horrible reviews. Just like any Friday," said one fan. To read more, type this excruciatingly long URL in your browser window: [www.fridaythe13thfilms.com/forum/showthread.php?s=ade74f77d545ce162dd5de151939fa70&treadid=2177](http://www.fridaythe13thfilms.com/forum/showthread.php?s=ade74f77d545ce162dd5de151939fa70&treadid=2177)

**EVIL TIDINGS** Speaking of *Jason X*, it seems the hotly anticipated *Resident Evil* movie may be suffering from the same malady, as its release date keeps getting pushed back. The film has been rescheduled to be released in the Fall next year, though previously it was to be released this October, then Spring 2002. Is someone trying to tell us something? ☹



Where the Wild Things Are: Soon to be a computer animated feature.

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# HELL

## REVISITED

By Gary Butler

**D**eathably the greatest living comic book writer, Alan Moore spent the better part of a decade living inside the mind of Jack the Ripper. (At least, he spent the better part of a decade writing about it; Moore himself isn't certain that he emerged unscathed.)


The fruit of his characteristically abnormal labour is the critically acclaimed, epic saga *From Hell*, "a melodrama in sixteen parts" as described by its tagline. The work's collected edition – all 576 pages of it – was released last year, and this fall, the story evolves into that rarest of beasts: a comic book film without superheroes.

Based largely upon a little-known speculative novel by Stephen Knight called *Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution* (pub: 1976), *From Hell* posits an entirely credible explanation as to who, how and why Jack the Ripper was. But while credit for the grunt work goes to Knight, Moore's interpretation accomplishes a great deal more than simply "papering over the cracks" (his words) of Knight's hypothesis.

Moore's fans know him to be first and foremost a man of ideas (and a master of horror as a close second). From the biological, ecological and existential horror of his award-winning *Swamp Thing* stories to the post-modern, "meet them again for the first time" twist-treatment of classic superhero archetypes in his current line of ABC comics, Moore is both an unparalleled storyteller and a fantastic judge of characters. And in *From Hell*'s Dr. William Gull – or as the author speculates, Jack the Ripper – Moore has created a character truly worth judging.

Then again, as anyone who has read Moore's epic knows, gaze not into the abyss. In *From Hell*, Gull literally gazes back.

*In Rue Morgue* spoke to Alan Moore in July.



**Alan Moore**  
Discusses his Seminal  
Graphic Novel, set to be  
a Feature Film this  
Fall....

*In the epilogue to From Hell, Inspector Aberdeen wonders, "How much of the world is true?" How much of From Hell is true?*

When I started *From Hell*, I hadn't gotten very far into it at all before I had a minor revelation about the nature of fiction, the nature of mythology and the nature of history. We were billing *From Hell* as a melodrama – as a fiction. That being said, it was an unusual type of fiction in that all of the story elements were culled from true or allegedly true sources. We went out of our way to include as many of those sources as possible and then try to stretch a skin of fiction over the available facts. It was after I'd written the first few episodes that I started to think, "Well, what else is history?"

*History is that which is written by the victor.*

Which is why history is unreliable. And all the more so because our view of history is always conditioned by our current mindset. We only tend to see things as a culture that we can recognize in terms of our contempo-

rary civilisation. We make a lot of errors, assumptions, mistakes. Consequently, we get history that is continuously revised.

*If we apply that to the world's century-long fascination with the Ripper case, is From Hell your "optimistic" opinion about what happened? For example, we do know, factually, that hysteria led to multiple, unrelated strangers writing letters to the papers, claiming to be the Ripper. But is it not possible that the same hysteria created a string of completely unrelated killings in the first place, and that we need there to be more to the story?*

There is that theory – that there was no Jack the Ripper. However my opinion is that, given the similarity of the killings and the fact that they occurred in an incredibly brief space of time, the coincidence otherwise would strain credibility. I do think that for those five [murdered prostitutes], we can be fairly certain that they were the work of one person. As to what really happened, well, the reason that I wrote *From Hell* in the first place was that I had this purely abstract idea whereby I thought that it would be interesting to do a fairly lengthy, graphic work centred around a murder. Not any particular murder – just the abstract of a murder. With murder, what you are seeing is the human condition in extremis. Very few of us are actually murderers, very few of us are actually murdered. It's an extreme human situation, and it seemed to me that, if examined with enough depth, it might be revealing about our broader human circumstance.

*Do you mean revealing about our inner natures and our instincts?*  
It might tell us something about ourselves. In this country, there are some writers of

*"We have that figure lurking in the back somewhere, and it manifests itself in all of our slasher films... the idea of someone in the shadows with something sharp."*

*-Alan Moore*

detective fiction that have tried to turn murder into a middle class parlour game. I'm not commenting on the skill of those stories or those writers, but the mindset behind them, whereby murder becomes a kind of intellectual puzzle. Once one has all the pieces, one has solved the murder. But it seems to me that we can only ever solve murders in forensic terms. You can say who did it, what they did it with and why they did it – a bit like a game of Clue: Professor Plum in the underground aviary with a mace and chain – and once you've pinned down those facts, the murder is solved. But it isn't, because the forensic view of murder is not the only one. A murder is a human event that has incredible repercussions. There are all sorts of threads that lead up to it, and all sorts of threads that lead away from it. To just study the event itself, to me, doesn't seem to be good enough. With *From Hell*, I didn't want to do a "whodunnit?" so much as a "what happened?"

*Is this why you called it a melodrama?*

Well, I used the word "melodrama" initially because I thought it had a nice Victorian ring to it. I since found out that the root of melodrama is just that: the re-creation of crimes in drama. In some instances, the original players went to the point of buying actual pieces of evidence, actual props from actual murders. The table that somebody was stabbed over would become the central prop in a staged performance of the murder! So, "melodrama" is quite an accurate term! The event behind *From Hell* was an event that left an impact crater on modern human consciousness, if you like. We wanted to study the crater; the implications of the murder, the society it happened in. As a sort of sidebar to this, one of the things that got me thinking along those lines originally was reading the title of a book by the late Douglas Adams, *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*. I've never read it, actually, but

at the time it came out, they put small ads in magazines advertising the agency's services. I saw the ads, and wondered what a holistic detective agency would actually mean. And I realised it would mean that you wouldn't solve the crime – you'd solve the entire culture the crime happened in. That was the sensibility that I eventually brought to bear on *From Hell*, the idea of doing a murder story where the actual murders remain at the centre, but it's more the stuff that's happening on the periphery. It's the threads running away from the murder, the lives that are affected by it, the way that those murders grew out of human history – particularly, English history. And it somehow became a part of the entire western mindset. We have

that shadowy figure lurking in the back somewhere, and it manifests itself in all of our slasher films, all of our *Halloween* and *Friday* the 13th and Freddy Krueger movies: the idea of someone in the shadows with something sharp. It's a very persuasive concept, and I think that it was first called to our



**Whitechapel, 1888:** The civil veneer of twentieth century London and (inset) its sick inwards as represented by the deformed body of the Elephant Man, who foreshadows the body horror of Jack the Ripper's slayings in the movie adaptation of *From Hell*

attention in the autumn of 1888.

*Can you go into greater detail about industrialisation's role in the rise of modern serial killing?*

One of the books I read as a backgrounder suggested that murder does have its seasons. If you look at the preferred forms of murder in the different centuries, you find overall that there were, in each period, typical kinds of murderers. In this case, you had this very strong, very affluent middle class, into which Gull had certainly risen despite having started on the lower rungs. At that time, the early 1880s, the working class had first been given the vote – there had been no real democracy for the lower orders until that point. Society was very unstable, a lot of people were rioting at that time, and there was an armed police to keep down the riots. During the 19th century, the typical murderer would have been a doctor, or a middle class professional gentleman of that type. You see, the middle class had something to fear from the emancipation of the working class: they felt threatened by the fact that the working class could now live in the same streets as them, their children would go to the same schools. This is class fear, class resentment, which leads to the typical murderer of the nineteenth century being, probably, a doctor, preying on the lower classes, as he felt that they were encroaching on him and his lifestyle. While that by no means proves that Gull was the murderer, it at least made my choice seem more credible.

*Having decided to write about murder, what made you decide to do the Ripper?*

In 1988, I was reading a lot about murders, getting ready for this as yet unspecified project; I wasn't planning to do the Ripper, because frankly, it was quite played out. But

# YEAR OF THE KNIFE

## Two new films bring the classic tale of Jack the Ripper to the red screen

by Emma Anderson

All Halloween's Eve is fast approaching, and the name of horror this year is Jack – the Ripper himself. This Fall, expect two new films to take a stab at resurrecting Whitechapel's notorious killer: the highly publicized *From Hell* movie directed by the Hughes Brothers (*Dead Presidents*) and the Canadian feature *Ripper: Letter From Hell* by John Eyres (*Project Shadow Chaser*).

*From Hell* stars Johnny Depp and Heather Graham in what producer Don Murphy (*Natural Born Killers*) says is a loose adaptation of Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's epic melodrama. The tone of the horror film, he says, bears comparison to the Alfred Hitchcock classics *Psycho* and *The Birds*.

"The biggest deviation is that if you filmed the graphic novel, you would have Jack the Ripper: *Portrait of a Serial Killer*, because the whole graphic novel is told from the point of view of the killer,"

Murphy told *Rue Morgue*. "We made a choice in 1993 – when we first bought the rights to *From Hell* – to make sure that it was as commercially viable as possible. Doing something like *Portrait of a Serial Killer* was never anything we entertained."

To that end, the main character in the film is Inspector Abberline (Depp) as opposed to the Ripper himself, who functioned as the protagonist in Moore's graphic novel. *From Hell* the movie will reinstate a sense of mystery as to the Ripper's identity and will tone down the explicit violence to render what Murphy describes as "Merchant Ivory meets a more contemporary *Silence of the Lambs*."

"We're not doing a low-budget slasher film, we're not doing gore for gore's sake, but we're accurate," he says. "The reason we chose the Hughes brothers to direct the film is because they made great urban thrillers before and, even though this is set in 1888, this is a very good urban thriller."

Also in theatres later this year, *Ripper: Letter From Hell*, an independent film which updates Ripper slayings to the contemporary setting of a modern university. In the movie, a copycat killer is on a mission to recreate the Whitechapel murders, over one hundred years after they originally occurred. Although *Ripper* has all the marks of the teen slasher sub-genre, including a young cast who tries to track the killer before he can pick them off, director John Eyres says that drawing from the Whitechapel murders was more than just a gimmick.

"What was interesting to me was the idea of contemporizing Jack the Ripper, but using also the facts that we were already aware of," he says. "I had the actual Jack the Ripper file duplicated, so I could investigate and

research every aspect of what was believed to be true about what he did. And although what we shot was fiction, the facts were real."

One thing you won't likely forget about *Ripper* is its murder montages which are deftly crafted to recreate the murders without explicitly showing the knife making the cuts. Recalling Hitchcock particularly, Eyres uses a sequence of images – a screaming face, shadows on the wall, blood running on the floor – in inventive ways.

"The idea for me was to firstly make sure I got the facts right, and secondly to make sure that I did as best that I could to frighten the hell out of the audience and make the movie as tense as possible without being explicitly violent," he says.

True to his word, expect a violent movie without any violence and if you need to know how it's done, you'll just have to watch it.

*From Hell* and *Ripper: Letter From Hell* are expected in theatres this Fall, just in time to ring in the Season of the Witch. Happy Halloween. ☘

*Ripper – Letter From Hell*: This independent film updates the Ripper murders to a contemporary university. What to expect: I Know What You Did Last Summer as directed by Alfred Hitchcock.





**Post-Mortem:** One advantage of ink and paper is that it allowed for the Ripper killings to be reproduced in a way they could never be on film.

nothing about any murder that I had found up to that point had enough scope to say the things that I wanted to say. Around about 1988, the autumn, it was the centenary of the Ripper murders, and there was a lot of stuff floating around, which I had a look at out of a kind of general interest. I came across the Stephen Knight book, *Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution* [pub: 1976], and thought, "it may be a piece of mass fantasy – a raving mad piece of fantasy – but the threads from it lead to so many interesting areas." I realised I could tell the story of Jack the Ripper in a way that it hadn't ever been told, using Knight's hypothesis as a basis and then incorporating as much of the other books as it was possible to do, papering over any cracks that Knight had left gaping in his work (because his work was attacked very soon after his death by the other Ripperologists).

*You also took some speculative liberties – hence Aberdeen meeting Marie Kelly without ever knowing who she is in the big picture.*

I came up with that angle a few months into it. A book I was reading pointed out that there was no way you could actually identify the body that was found in Miller's Court. And if you saw the autopsy photos, you'd know it's true – it's difficult to tell which way up that body is! And you wouldn't want to take a second glance. So it sort of struck me that it was only the presence of that body in that particular room that was loaned to Marie Kelly that made people so certain that it was indeed her body. When you add to that the possibility that there were two women who claimed with great certainty that they'd spoken to and seen Marie Kelly the morning following her apparent death, adding those kinds of things together and bringing in a couple of other threads, it struck me that there might be a way to bring Marie Kelly out of this after all. I didn't want to come straight out and say it – I wanted to leave it ambiguous. Because in truth, it is ambiguous. We don't know for sure who was in that

room. In order to add the mystery to my story, I set up these encounters between Aberdeen and the woman whose face we never actually see, and who gives her name as Emma – one of Marie Kelly's known nicknames – and it all tied together quite neatly. If Aberdeen had given her a loan of money, if she had received a tip off from Prince Eddy (if he was the man with a large collar and tux that was seen by one of the informants talking to Marie Kelly in Miller's Court), then that gave me a way that she might have escaped.

*You have a depth of feeling for these characters. What about Gull – did you get drawn into hell with him as you wrote?*

Oh yeah. Certainly people who are close to me said that they very definitely noticed if I was writing *From Hell* that week, particularly if I was writing a Gull-heavy chapter. To get yourself into that mindset, which thinks such incredible things and is actually more intelligent than I am, is such a challenge. I found that my speech patterns became more careful in their diction, more Victorian in their phrasing, there was a sardonic edge to an awful lot of my conversations. Gull is the strongest character in the book, and he had more of an effect on me because he is such an extraordinary mindset and he is so deceptively difficult to argue with. The ideas are completely mad, but they're very seductive.

*Is it because there is internal logic and consistency to them?*

They're very consistent, very erudite and as I say, very seductive. A couple of people told me the most horrific thing about *From Hell* was that they found themselves starting to slip into Gull's mindset because it was so persuasive, and because he himself approached his ideas with such passion.

*Let's talk about Marie Kelly's vivisection. How did you write that chapter?*

I was very aware all the way up to Chapter 10 that, sooner or later, I was going to have to go into that room with Jack the Ripper and Marie Kelly. And the only way that I could be faithful and true to the actual event



## AUTUMN OF TERROR

### From Hell

By Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell  
Top Shelf/Eddie Campbell Comics  
[www.topshelfcomix.com](http://www.topshelfcomix.com)

Sir William Gull, high ranking Freemason and Queen Victoria's personal physician, was the real Jack the Ripper. That, according to Alan Moore, is the most logical (or at least most entertaining) solution to the Ripper mystery. Moore detailed his account in *From Hell*, a massive comic book miniseries that blended a mixture of fact and fiction and added a cast of characters to the Ripper event, the likes of Oscar Wilde, Alistair Crowley and the Elephant Man.

Aside from being one of Moore's most sophisticated pieces, *From Hell* represented a watershed in comics; a work of historical fiction, dramatizing the events of the bloody autumn of 1888 like they'd never been seen before. Rather than play the eyes old gussing game as to the Ripper's true identity, Moore reveals his Ripper in the first issue and spends the remaining nine shadowing him as he rips his way across London's Whitechapel district.

In Moore's story, Gull is dispatched to halt a plot by four East End prostitutes to blackmail the royal family by threatening to reveal a tryst Prince Albert Victor, nephew to Queen Victoria, had with a shop girl that resulted in an illegitimate birth. Gull leads a bloody swath through the East End as the Ripper's legend grows, and Gull's sanity begins to deteriorate.

But the kaleidoscopic plot of *From Hell* is only part of the perverse joys to be found within these pages. A searing indictment of power, politics and poverty, the tale told is as much about the murder of five prostitutes in the destitute quarter of England's East End as it is a retrospective overture to the 20th century. Packed with extensive endnotes, well realized characters and Eddie Campbell's flawless artwork, *From Hell* is part story, part sermon, part cultural autopsy.

—Brad Abraham



# The Nemesis of Neglect

August 31 - November 8, 1888

letters he wrote to the police. "Catch me when you can," he wrote police in a letter dated October 6, 1888. Soon, his name spread like a social disease and eventually hit headlines around the world. Jack the Ripper had arrived like a spectre out of the London fog, forever to ensnare the popular imagination.

But what is it about the Ripper in particular that made him a name for all time? Sure, the Whitechapel murders are commonly viewed as the first of their type, but Jack's misdeeds have since been overshadowed by more ambitious monsters of the modern world: Jeffrey Dahmer (12 victims), Ted Bundy (24 victims), and

John Wayne Gacy (30 plus victims), to name but three. Yet still, Jack the Ripper holds a pre-eminent spot in the black pantheon of real-life killers.

One important element that sets the Ripper apart from the aforementioned is a sense of deep mystery. Unlike his successors, Jack the Ripper was never caught. And although

from the aforementioned is a sense of deep mystery. Unlike his successors, Jack the Ripper was never caught. And although there are favourite suspects, there is no evidence suggesting one over another. Perhaps more unnerving is that criminologists agree that it is unlikely the Ripper was motivated by a sexual desire or by brute anger. Nevertheless, the extent of the mutilations increased with each killing, as if the Ripper's appetite became more voracious with indulgence. Why he did what he did seems as unorthodox as who he actually was. Not surprisingly, the sense of mystery has cast a supernatural aura on the event and given rise to a lot of imaginative interpretations.

The facts related to Jack the Ripper can be traced back to August 31, 1888, when the body of Mary Ann Nichols was discovered in the early morning by a passerby who mistook her for a drunk. Her throat was slit and she had also suffered a minor stomach mutilation. Exactly eight days later, on September 8, the Ripper struck again, bringing down Annse Chapman, who was found with her throat cut, her stomach and genitals badly mutilat-

ed and some of her entrails placed around her neck. As public tensions mounted, Jack retreated from his grisly work, only to reappear three weeks later, on the night of September 30. As if bursting at the seams from a repressed bloodlust, he struck twice in one night, killing Elizabeth Stride and, later, Catherine Eddowes. Both victims had had their throats slit and Eddowes' corpse had been extensively mangled.

Even as police infiltrated the streets of Whitechapel, the Ripper was able to exact his last and most hideously macabre murder when, on November 8, he entered a tiny apartment in Miller's Court which housed one Mary Jane Kelly. There, according to a document written by Sir Melville Macnaghten of the Scotland Yard, he became "at least two hours engaged" in extensively butchering Kelly's body. Stunned members of the Yard would later take a photo of the carnage, "without which seeing," Macnaghten later wrote, "it is impossible to imagine the awful mutilation." With that, the Ripper took his last bow and vanished back from whence he came, almost as if he had finally and truly completed a mission from Hell.

Neither Scotland Yard, nor any of the many Ripperologists who have searched in their wake, have ever uncovered Jack the Ripper's identity. And even though some theorists have declared him to be the perfect murderer and envisioned a life of diabolical success beyond London's gaslit streets, it is unlikely that the Ripper ever murdered again.

Macnaghten, the last original source directly related to the case, ended his document with the following statement: "A much more rational theory is that the murderer's brain gave way altogether after his awful glut in Miller's Court, and that he immediately committed suicide or, as a possible alternative, was found to be so hopelessly mad by his relations, that he was by them confined in some asylum."

**-Rod Gudino**



Mary Nichols



Annie Chapman



Mary Jane Kelly



Elizabeth Stride

On September 29, 1888, the magazine *Punch* (a.k.a. *The London Charivari*) published a panel cartoon called *The Nemesis of Neglect*, which depicted a ghostly figure brandishing a knife in the streets of London. On its forehead was written the word CRIME.

The cartoon was a reference to several slayings in the Whitechapel area of the city, where destitution and poverty reigned supreme. It was a place where evicted tenants would line the streets and huddle against the cold, a place that William Booth, a decade earlier, would declare a battleground for his Salvation Army ministry since it contained, in his words, "all the sin that is in the world".

The bitter irony of the cartoon was that the day after it appeared, Jack the Ripper would act out his most daring feat, a double homicide several miles apart in streets heavily patrolled by police officers already on the alert after two other murders just weeks prior. What was particularly unnerving was that the Ripper not only murdered his victims in the open streets, he took time to disembowel them as well. And yet, no one saw or heard a thing.

Like an unearthly phantom, Jack the Ripper terrorized one of London's most needy districts during the months between August and November 1888. The only tangible proof of his existence lay in his grim handiwork and some eight, perhaps less, personal



Kate Eddowes

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Directors Albert and Allen Hughes go over a scene with Johnny Dapp (Inspector Abberline) and Heather Graham (Mary Kelly) in 20th Century Fox's *From Hell*

was to literally go in there, almost in real time, and take the reader with me and show this event in its full glorious horror. To actually get across to people what really happened minus any of the gloss that films or true accounts tend to bring to it. I wanted the readers to actually be in the room with me and Gull and Marie.

*And do a bit of time travelling back to our time as well, as Gull shifts forward to our society briefly and sees "a culture disinterested even in its most abysmal wounds." There seems to be more purpose and reason in Gull at that horrific moment than there is in our age of infotainment, and Gull truly becomes an anti-hero at that moment*

Someone actually wrote about that in one of the letters that we got, saying it was "the most astute comment upon the 20th century that I have yet read, and it's coming from the lips of a deranged serial killer." I was quite flattered by that. It struck me that to some degree all the way through the book there is a sense that these events are being consid-

ered from outside time – we even talk about Howard Hinton, who published his musings on time in *What Is the Fourth Dimension?* [1884], which we have ringing through the book from the very earliest chapters. There is also the Masonic view of space/time as a rough block chipped out by the great architect, which is our job to finish. All of these things suggested an almost concrete view of time, where time is a great lump where everything is happening at once. This is congruent with a lot of the stuff that Stephen Hawking postulated. In the story, it struck me that, to some degree, *From Hell* isn't about things that are happening in the past – it's about how they affect us now, and what their meaning is for us there. There is a very strong connection between the 1880s when those events were happening and the 1980s/1990s when I was looking back at them. *From Hell* was connecting up those times and seeing how so many of the movements in technology and other fields in the 1880s had contained the seeds of every major event of the 20th century.

## Cloak & Dagger



Commonly depicted as a man with a top hat and black overcoat, Jack the Ripper's sinister image has loomed in countless films, books, wax museums and games. In fact, there is nothing known about the real Jack the Ripper's appearance, or that he even wore the same clothing on more than one occasion. The two eyewitness accounts which put a man of the above description near two of the victims cannot be substantiated as it is not known if the man in question was in fact the killer or not.

In any case, the image of the Ripper which has been passed down through time indicates that, in the popular imagination, Jack the Ripper was a person of high distinction, perhaps a nobleman but in any case, not a resident of Whitechapel's slums. Montague Druitt, a troubled medical man and prime suspect for the stayings would seem to put some validity into this notion, but the second most popular suspect, Aaron Kosminski, would indicate the exact opposite. Whatever the actual case, the killer's top hat and cloak underline two important elements found in most Ripper narratives: that Jack took pains to hide himself from casual glances and that he was, like most noblemen of the time, intelligent and educated.

—Rod Gudino

## THE ARCHITECT OF FEAR EDDIE CAMPBELL DRAWS AND QUARTERS HELL ITSELF

Eddie Campbell's vision of hell on earth – circa 1900 – is subtle by necessity. In Campbell and Alan Moore's graphic masterpiece, *From Hell*, London serves as the background for Jack the Ripper's depraved murder spree. But if the city is the setting, hell itself – the Ripper's claimed place of residence – is the environment.

"Horror is a million miles from my usual interests," states the Australian artist best known for his self-published comic magazine, *Bacchus*, and his autobiographical character, Alec. "All the time I was drawing *From Hell*, I was determined to avoid horror clichés. If *From Hell* succeeds, it succeeds in that."

Campbell's strategy for rendering the spiritual, inner hell of pre-industrial London involved surgically skillful, lifelike renderings of the city's dark arteries in glorious, shadowy black and white.

"Colour really does complicate things hideously," Campbell says. To that end, actual monuments, streets and back alleys, as well as gritty details of advertisements, signposts and store awnings were painstakingly photo-researched by both collaborators.



The painted-into-a-corner, hellish reality of the Ripper-era streetwalker's life is brought into further vivid detail by Campbell's stark rendering of the dosses – cheap lodging houses where off-duty hookers were oftentimes tied together to sleep standing up, for the sake of maximizing space. "It's an historical story, and all of the events really happened," Campbell says. "It never occurred to me to do it other than lifelike."

The blood-ridden vivisection murder in Marie Kelly's doss was Campbell's greatest challenge. "I expected it to be upsetting," he says, "but there were so many pages of it before that, so by the time I got to it, it was just ink and not blood."

Thank hell for small mercies.

—Gary Butler

Read *Morgue* says: READ MORE EDDIE!  
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## Gaslight Ghouls

**1889 The Curse Upon Mitre Square** by J.F. Brewer

First fictionalization of the Ripper case, this story foreshadows both *The Hound* and *The Exorcist III* by having the ghost of a mad monk possess the weak-willed and drive them to murder.

**1892 Uppokaronen** by Adolf Paul

Second known piece of Ripper fiction, written in Finland, banned in Russia.

**1902 Englejet** by Frank Westland

A literary heavyweight brings Jack into his stage play to kill off his lead Lulu. More on her later.

**1911 The Lodger** by Marie-Belle Levesque

Written as a short story and expanded into a novel two years later, *The Lodger* tells the tale of an ordinary family who suspects that their border is none other than Jack the Knife.

**1943 Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper** by Robert Bloch

Bloch's seminal short story which eventually became a TV play introduced in North America by Boris Karloff. Other notable Ripper sightings by Bloch include *A Toy For Juliette* (1957) and *Night Of The Ripper* (1984).

**1966 A Study in Terror** (i.e.a. *Sherlock Holmes vs. Jack the Ripper*) by Elery Green

In the style of grand tragedy, six of the principals in this novel get offed in the last four pages.

**1967 The Prowler in the City at the Edge of the World** by Horton Calise

The futuristic sequel to Bloch's *Yours Truly...* by the incomparable Ellison.

**1974 Jack the Ripper** by Ben Pender

A musical featuring "scenes of fun, terror, song and dance" including the ditty Ripper's Going To Get You if You Don't Watch Out.

**1974 Farca and Hypocry** by Bing Lewis

In this play, Jack sides with Marx and rips for the lower classes.

**1975 Meet the Ripper** by Certain Theatre Company (London)

Notable for its theme song "Eine Kleine Rippemusikc."

**1975 Strawberry Spring** by Stephen King

A cool homage in which a modern Jack unsheathes his knife in an American college campus. Apparently, this one's being turned into a film.

**1978 The Last Sherlock Holmes Story** by Michael Balfie

Jack the Ripper finally unmasked es... Sherlock Holmes!

**1988 Gotham by Gaslight** by Reginald and Reginald

Batman hangs with Sigmund Freud and crosses paths with The Ripper. Vintage comic noir by the creator of *Hellboy*.

**1992 Aeneas Dracula** by Kim Newman

The Ripper has fangs when vampires take over the world in this apocalyptic novel by one of the genre's heavyweights.

**1995 Young Witches 2: London Babyface** by Salma Isaks and Barone

Innocence is indeed lost in this pornographic comic chronicle which details the depravity of the Victorian era under the spectre of Jack.

-Rod Gudino



**Yours Truly...:** Campbell and Moore take a break from their labours.

*For example?*

That was when the machine gun was invented, when the motor car was invented; it was when the French moved into Indochina, which would lead to the Vietnam war; it was the West's first clash with contemporary Islam; the Mitchelson-Morley experiments proved that the ether didn't exist, which led to Einstein's theories, which led to Hiroshima; you had Hitler horn at the same time that the Ripper murders were going on. From that perspective, it's difficult to look at the 1880s and not see them containing the seeds of the 20th century.

*Actually, then, the seeds of the worst aspects of the 20th century:*

At one point, I have Gull saying, "The 20th century: I have delivered it." This horrible event in Miller's Court becomes a nativity, with Gull as the midwife for our entire bloody era. I was connecting two periods of time, and it all came to a head with that particular chapter, where you get Gull projected ahead into the building that now occupies what used to be Dorset Street and Miller's Court. After we've spent the previous nine chapters having our say about the Victorians and Dr Gull in particular, I thought it was only fair to give him equal time and to let him say what he wants to say about our era.

*The people in that office, as judged by Gull, are disaffected, and the sense is conveyed that despite our advancements over his time, we are wasting life. Gull takes life, and admittedly with a lunatic's agenda, but because he believes there's a legitimate reason to do it...*

Gull finds life and death meaningful, which is what appalls him about our

situation. To us, the meaning seems to have hied away. The irony is that this is the classic symptom of any psychotic murderer. They are supposed to have complete absence of effect, in that nothing – they could watch puppies burning or watch paint dry – there is no effect, nothing means much to them, and that's why they can kill. So to have Gull accuse us of this pathology stretching right the way across our society offered an irony that pleased me.

*Ultimately, Alan, some of that opinion must be yours:*

Yeah, obviously. Although I tried to psychically channel William Gull where possible, these are still my words. Admittedly, it was nothing that I'd actually thought of until I started to write the project. But it seems to me that perhaps in bygone times, archaic ways of thinking were actually a lot richer than our current mindset. Rationalism has given us so much, but it has taken away as well. If you look at modes of thinking from the English renaissance, you can see a way of thinking that is totally different from the way that we currently think. In the renaissance, everything has correspondence with everything else – everything becomes a fairly rich tapestry. Compare that to a world in which symbols don't mean anything anymore, people don't connect them up, and a fact is a fact is a fact. There is a certain barrenness there, in our modern mindset.

*Does this explain why there are more serial killers today and, worse, why our culture is so fascinated with them?*

You look around, and fewer and fewer people seem to think anymore. Now,

it's not like everybody's going to turn into a killer, but we do seem to have more and more people who do, and that might be because these are unique individuals who just happen to have complete absence of effect, or it might be that they have grown up in a society that encourages absence of effect by overloading people with so much information that they kind of switch off. That's where we're drifting into a future, where everything is a kind of a cartoon, and everything kind of an endlessly scrolling set of images and hursts of information that are purely there for our entertainment. To some degree, to put that up against a mind as rich and derailed as Gull's struck me as an interesting paradox. Yes, this is a person who takes life, but he at least knows its meaning, and when he takes it, it has meaning – for him – and even though that meaning might be completely derailed, it is at least an attempt to give meaning to life and existence. Whereas most of the people in the office, you doubted whether that would have ever crossed their minds.

*We do have to credit Gull for being "active" when the people in the office are absolutely passive.*

Well, he was certainly no couch potato. [Laughs] As you say, he is an anti-hero at that point, and when you can see things out of his historical context and personal perspective; looking at ours, it says as much about him as it does us.

*Obviously film is its own language. Have you seen the recent translation called From Hell?*

No, just some photographs they sent me, but I have to say that the sets are supernaturally accurate. Like I've said, I'm quite an habitué of Whitechapel and the surrounding area, and there's some streets that I know very very well, Thorne St. between Christ Church, Spitalfields and the Ten Bells pub, which is just across the road. And I saw a picture of that set; intellectually I knew that this was an enormous facade built over six blocks of Prague, but down to the last cobble I could have sworn that it looked exactly like the street that I myself had stood on. All the people involved in the film are very good at what they do. Johnny Depp is a very good actor; I watched him last night doing readings from Jack Kerosac on television; Heather Graham was very good in *Boogie Nights* and *Twin Peaks*, which certainly endears her to me. And of course, Ian Holm is a fantastic British character actor. He'll be quite spine chilling in this film. The directors, Allen and Albert Hughes, are very good. I thought that *Memento II Society* was a very good statement of its time. My distance from the film is purely self-created. I was invited to Prague, but I'm not really much of



## The Cutting Room

**1926 *The Lodger*** by Alfred Hitchcock

A silent adaptation of the Belloc Lowndes story which ushered in the first great era of British film and launched Hitchcock's career.

**1929 *Panders' Box*** by Bengt Wilhelms Petret

Based on a 1904 play by Frank Wedekind, *Panders' Box* was one of the first serial killer films and was banned in Finland and Sweden.

**1953 *Man in the Attic*** by Hugh Ferguson

Here, Jack the Ripper is portrayed by Jack the Pallance in yet another retelling of *The Lodger*.

**1960 *Jack the Ripper*** by Robert Baker and Wendy Barrett

This black and white film switches to gruesome colour in the climax when poor Jack winds up on the business end of an elevator. Squash!

**1964 *Dr. Strangelove*** by Stanley Kubrick

The end of the world is ushered in by the paranoid rantings of General Jack D. Ripper (Sterling Hayden), who fulfills his namesake by triggering a global nuclear holocaust.

**1967 *Star Trek: Wolf in the Fold*** by Robert Buck

Jack murders his way through the galaxy only to lodge in the computers of the Starship Enterprise!

**1966 *The Avengers: Fog*** by Geoffrey Bellman and Patrick Campbell

This episode was originally billed Ripper, Jack's name was changed to The Gaslight Ghoul.

**1971 *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde*** by Ray Ward Baker

It can now be revealed that Jack was actually Edward... Hyde that is. Searching for the formula to turn himself into a woman, Hyde stalks and slashes his way through Whitechapel prostitutes as unwitting test subjects. Makes perfect sense, doesn't it?

**1971 *Boobs of the Ripper*** by Peter Sandy

It was inevitable that the House of Hammer would give Saucy Jack's story the babes, boobs and blood treatment, and the end result is goofy fun.

**1971 *Jack El Despiadado de Londres (A.K. Jack the***

*Mangler of London)* by Jose Luis Merodio  
Hilarious German/Spanish story in which Sherlock Holmes dresses up as a woman to finally nab Jack.

**1974 *A Knife for the Ladies*** by Larry Sengler

Jack pops up in the Southwest-desert town of Mesal and starts ripping into women of ill repute until the Sheriff finally gets 'em.

**1974 *The Night Stalker: The Ripper*** by Richard Matheson

After two made-for-TV movies, Carl Kolchak finally gets the green light for a series and his first assignment is Jack the Ripper himself!



*Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde*

**1979 *Murder By Desire*** by Bob Clark

A politically minded Jack is down on whores who express a radical anarchistic ideology. Some of this film's backstory involving Royal conspiracies had a strong influence on Moore and Campbell's *From Hell*.

**1980 *Fantasy Island: With Arnieko, Jack the Ripper*** by T

Jack shanks Tattoo who screams "Boss, di pain! di pain!" Not really, but it would have made for a great episode.

**1980 *Time After Time*** by Nicholas Brown

H.G. Wells (Malcolm McDowell) pursues the Ripper (David Warner) to present day San Francisco for a rousing entertainment that works better than it seems to on paper. Not to be missed.

**1986 *Jack's Back*** by Beverly Serringer

Similar to *Time After Time*, the difference here is that this one stars James Spader and also happens to suck big time. Jack himself would be embarrassed to be associated with it.

**1986 *Jack the Ripper*** by Derek Westoby and David Wickes

This finely crafted made-for-TV movie stars Sir Michael Caine as Inspector Frederick Abberline and is a serious attempt to solve the Ripper mystery, one hundred years after it originally occurred.

**1983 *The Banker*** by William Webb

A wealthy financier by the name of Spaulding Osborne (played with maniacal glee by Duncan Regehr) is the Jack in this film. The banker puts a personal touch on the systematic murders by marking his victims' corpses with a bizarre symbol.

**1986 *Edge of Sanity*** by Gerald Blake

Anthony Perkins plays Dr. Henry Jekyll and Jack "The Ripper" Hyde to lunatic perfection. Norman Bates who?

-Brad Abraham and Rod Gudino



# Murder Ballads

## 1929-35 *Lulu* by Alton Berg

In this opera, Jack the Ripper makes an appearance in the final act to murder Lulu, a beautiful young girl who makes one very unfortunate mistake.

## 1961 *Jack the Ripper* by Link Wray

Wailing instrumental surf tune which plays on tempo changes building to a climactic finale.

## 1971 *Jack the Stripper (a.k.a. Fairies Wear Boots)* by Black Sabbath

Technically named after the Nudes murders which occurred in London in 1964-65, but had a marked resemblance to the Ripper slayings. The song has nothing to do with either, but the Sabbath couldn't resist the title.

## 1972 *Hands of Jack the Ripper* by Screamin' Lord Sutch

Perhaps the definitive Ripper homage as delivered by England's true horror rock icon. Complete with eerie footsteps, wailing victims and lyrics such as "All you evil women better watch your step, he might be right behind you, reaching for your neck!" Sutch also graces the album cover in full Ripper regalia.

## 1975 *The Ripper* by Judas Priest

Rob Halford shrieks: "Oh hear my warning, never turn your back on the Ripper!"

## 1979 *Nightcrawler* by AC/DC

A bluesy creeper and the last song Bon Scott recorded before his death in 1980. Coincidence? We think not....

## 1981 *Ripper* by The Exploited

Actually refers to Britain's Yorkshire Ripper, Peter William Sutcliffe, whose five-year reign of terror from 1975-1981 left thirteen women dead and another seven wishing they were.



Screamin' Lord Sutch does his best Ripper!

## 1989 *Jack the Ripper* by Bill Cofe

Inevitable.

## 1990 *The Death of Jack the Ripper*

by The Legendary Pink Dots

A heady look into the murderer's conscience in which Jack is savagely put to rest via the collective force of his prey. "She could smell him as she gripped for the knife, and held it to his neck./As 16 crippled hands fumbled with his zip, twisted, ate him slowly...kissed him quick."

## 1992 *Jack the Ripper* by Beck Cove & The Bad Seeds

Apparently, Nick's got a woman who "rules his house with an iron fist/She screams out Jack the Ripper every time I try to give that girl a kiss." Time to find a new girl, Nick.

## 1992 *Jack the Ripper* by Waterhead

Lemmy croons: "Cold steel, whisper in the night/He'll be at your side, with a smile and a knife/It seems like dreaming, moving in the dance/The last embrace you'll ever know, the violence of romance!"

## 1993 *Jack and the Ripper* by Michael Kamen and

the Los Angeles Rock and Roll Ensemble featuring Beckenbend!

Another drawing instrumental which slowly gathers momentum before a catastrophic conclusion.

## 1994 *Jack the Ripper Parts 1 & 2*

by Southern Culture on the Skids

A backwoods take on the Link Wray tune complete with tribal drums, tortured guitar and big chord wailing. What things may have sounded like if it was Zeke the Ripper.

## 1994 *Jack the Ripper* by Merckxy

Oh' gloomy Gus himself laments the frustration of unrequited love as an analogy to the terrible horror of anonymity poor Jack must have experienced lurking unnoticed in the shadows. "Your face is as mean as your life has been/And no one knows a thing about my life, I can come and go as I please."

## 1995 *Jack the Ripper* by Gabeir Wolf

Strictly live rock 'n' roll fodder for Japan's "Kung-Fu Ramone." If you're able to make out what the Wild Zero star has to say about Jack you've got us awed. Look 'n' Loll!

## 1995 *Jack the Ripper* by L.L. Cool J.

L.L. equates Jack's homicidal tendencies with his own "slick" ability to really rock the mic. "I'm a beast on the microphone, a night-stalker/A killer machine, a savage street talker/Jason with a axe, but I put it on wax." Word L.L., word.

-Tom Dragomir

a globetrotter. And my distance is ultimately a necessary emotional distance. I recognise that, however good the film is, the chances of it having an awful lot to do with my hook are probably slim. I believe that the Hughes Bros. have tried very hard to recreate the atmosphere as much as is possible - I know they gave everybody on the crew a copy of my book to read so that they could soak up its atmosphere, and that's commendable. The best thing that I could really hope is... you know *Bladerunner*? It was based on *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K. Dick, which was an excellent story. *Bladerunner* was a very good film in its own right, but didn't bear a lot of resemblance to the hook. That's what I'm hoping for with *From Hell*; that's an outcome I'd gladly accept.

*Preserving the essence, being accurate in at least that much.*

The feeling, the flavour, whatever we want to call it. In fairness to the film industry, just look at the hook - *From Hell* takes something like five hours to read, doesn't it? You're going to have to chop out three fifths of it. I should imagine that's most of the mystical stuff, the slow and careful recreations of entire scenes - and I certainly can't see a long digression about London's architecture having a pentacle over it having much of a place in a modern Hollywood film! I can't see that going over very well in Peoria.

*I think Chapter 4 would definitely have been the first to go*

Definitely, and some of the later, more hallucinatory ones as well. And the Marie Kelly chapter - well, you could only do that in comics! In film, it would be unbearable. You couldn't show someone having their breast chopped off on film - it would signal something completely different, and immediately plunge it into exploitation. In its proper place, in the narrative that is *From Hell*, that sequence is barbaric but not exploitative. To look at it perhaps from Hollywood's perspective for a moment, you really can get away with more in comics than you can in film. It makes me wonder which is the more grown-up medium.

*Do you expect to see the movie in pre-release?*

My natural inclination would be to wait for it to come out on video, because I don't even go to the cinema. However, my daughters, if there's any chance of a premiere and I don't take them along, they've got this Johnny Depp kidnap scheme all ready, so it would break their little hearts if I disappoint them. For me, I'm not in any hurry. ☹



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## Picture Tim Burton getting together with H.R. Giger and Ray Harryhausen to create Japanese Anime.

The result might be something like Voltaire's...



He's an animator, a comic book artist, a

by  
Lisa Ladouceur

musician — a self-proclaimed “enigmatic renaissance man.” Thirty-four year-old New Yorker Voltaire, the creator of Sci-Fi.com’s *Chi-Chian* series is also very funny. Especially for a guy whose work celebrates the gbsily.

“I’ve always felt that the world was an extremely evil place and I could clearly see the dark side of people,” he explains. “I think that spawned an interest in the macabre, but at the same time I felt my best defense was to laugh at the things that bothered me. Hence, I think I inadvertently turned into a huggably gothic person.”

Voltaire began channeling this attitude into stop motion animation at the age of 10. He landed his first professional job at 17 and later found work injecting his twisted sense of humour into spots for Budweiser, MTV and the Sci-Fi Channel. In addition to working and playing his own music, Voltaire started writing and drawing comic books. It was here that the story of *Chi-Chian* began.

Six comics for Sirius introduced Voltaire’s vision of 31st century, post-war Manhattan, a world populated by overgrown insects, worm trains and a Japanese/Gothic/Betty Boop-type character named *Chi-Chian*. After featuring her in an animated station ID for the Sci-Fi Channel, Voltaire was asked to bring her to life in an animated series for their website ([www.scifi.com/chichian](http://www.scifi.com/chichian)). The 14 episodes follow *Chi-Chian* and a beautifully imaged, bizarre cast (including waltzing cockroaches) through their struggle to survive amidst the forces of evil.

“The story really focuses on innocence and how hard it is to remain pure,” he says. “I tried to create endearing characters that are essentially misfits, in the hopes that mainstream culture will open up a bit and be more tolerant to people who are different.”

The series’ style is a mix of Japanese

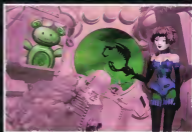
anime, H.R. Giger futuristic spook and Tim Burton-style whimsy. The unique look required a fusion of classic stop motion techniques with web programming. Voltaire created and photographed the objects, which were then scanned and animated using Flash. Originally, he was told this couldn’t be done, but Voltaire knew that only stop motion would give his world the right vibe.

“Unlike CGI or cell animation, stop motion has a very surrealistic quality. There’s something odd about looking at an actual object that moves by itself, as if it had some kind of internal life force. It has an otherworldly feel to it, which lends itself to nightmarish images.”

The gentle voice of *Chi-Chian* is provided by Chinese actress Bai Ling (*The Crow*, *Wild Wild West*, *Anna and the King*), a suggestion (and aspiration) of Voltaire’s.

“The Sci-Fi marketing people thought we should get someone well known and I had remembered Bai Ling having this beautiful voice in *The Crow* so they said they’d call her. That night, I rented *Anna and the King* and when she uttered her first line I pretty much melted. I knew she WAS *Chi-Chian*.”

The *Chi-Chian* series debuted on the site in November 2000, wrapping up in May of this year. All 14 episodes are archived for viewing on-demand, along with detailed background information on characters and places, plus some fun, silly game action. Voltaire says that the next installment won’t begin until sometime in 2002. In the meantime he’s preparing for the release of his third album of campy, baroque pop (*Boo*



**Creepy Cute:** “Stop motion has an otherworldly feel to it which lends itself to nightmarish images,” says creator Voltaire.

*How, due Valentine’s Day*) and the re-release of his graphic novel *Oh My Goth!* (Version 2.0, featuring a new issue of the spinoff *Humans Suck*).

For more info, visit [www.voltaire.net](http://www.voltaire.net). ☺



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# DEMONIUM

the new kill orgy  
from German gore god **Andreas Schnaas**

# Schnaas

by Andrew Bailey



**Carnage on Widescreen:** Scenes of gore from *Demonium*, Schnaas' first English language project shot on film.

German auteur Andreas Schnaas has long been at the forefront of the German splatter underground; his 1989 debut feature *Fielet Schit* was the first German film to be shot on video. Twelve years and five features later (including two sequels to *Fielet Schit* and a remake of Joe D'Amato's infamous *Autrophophagus*), Schnaas has won the withered hearts of gorehounds the world over with a potent mix of excessive violence, outrageous gore and gleeful black humour. This is the guy who brought us books in scrotum, sphincter spine slanting and – most outrageously – a zombie giving another zombie a blow job! With those kind of credentials, there's little doubt that Schnaas is, along with Jorg (Accromantik) Buttgereit, responsible

for the German wave of underground gore horror which has become its own Berlin Wall of cult cinema.

With *Demonium*, his latest film recently completed, Schnaas returns to the violent blood narratives that hold continual fascination for him. For the first time, however, Schnaas is entertaining hopes that his new film will reach a wider audience and, to that end, made some important changes to his method. Not only was *Demonium* shot on film, but it is the director's first English language project. Nevertheless, Schnaas promises that although he's working with his largest budget to date, his taste for extreme visuals has not been compromised. *Demonium*, he says, will be his most violent film ever.

Recalling the genre's vintage titles like *The Cat and the Canary* and *The Old Dark House*, *Demonium* follows the family and friends of a murdered patriarch as they gather at his secluded castle for the reading of his last will and testament. One by one they are stalked and killed by an unknown maniac lurking in the dank catacombs below. For a truly international flavour, Schnaas moved production from Germany to Italy, and enlisted the services of special FX house Fanta X, which had earlier provided FX for Dario Argento's latest film *Nosferatu*.

*Rue Morgue* caught up with Andreas Schnaas as he completed post-production work on *Demonium*.

"I admit, it is sometimes extreme and not to everybody's taste, but should we censor country music just because I think it is torturous and disgusting?"

-Andreas Schnaas

Your films have been a favorite target for censors. How do you react to that?

I think that certain kinds of censorship must happen like, for example child pornography, etc., no doubt about it! But when it comes to horror movies I think it is necessary. I mean, nothing in them is real, it's just technique and special effects. I admit, it is sometimes extreme and not to everybody's taste, but should we censor country music just because I think it is torturous and disgusting?

Germany is especially known for strict censorship laws. Has this situation changed with the European Union?

Not really. I had the police in my house again just because some Canadian director whose movie is banned [*Urban Flesh: Mutation*, see RMP 14] sent me a tape to check out. Films that used to be banned in the '70s are being re-released uncensored now, because they don't seem as violent as they did back then. But still, they mutilate movies to get an R rating.

How have your films been received at home?

People love them or hate them. I have very loyal fans that keep in contact with me through my websites and support my work with their constant interest. When we show my movies in Germany it is very wild. But most of my fans come from the US and Japan.

Your films are readily available in both Europe and Japan, but not here. Are there

plans for North American distribution of your previous films on video DVD?

All the time, but the US is a very tough market. You only get really bad deals where you are being ripped off most of the time. I cannot control sales from Germany and so I have to be careful. However, I hope to sell *Anthropophagous 2000* (a.k.a. *Cannibal 2000*) to the US soon; a dealer is busy trying to sort things out there.

*Demonium* was shot on film. Was this decision artistic or financial?

I just wanted to go a step further but now I know it was a big step and I am very proud of the result. *Demonium* is a fantastic movie; my wife Sonja and author Ted Geoghegan from Montana wrote a great script for the movie and the result is fantastic. I hope I can convince more people of the value of my work. I shot the film on 35 mm so it can be shown at various festivals and can therefore be brought to a wider audience. Shooting on digital video is of course far cheaper but you cannot attend a lot of festivals and it doesn't have the same look.

Legendary FX maestro and filmmaker Sergio Stivalenti is doing some work on this film. How did he come to be involved?

I was introduced by a friend to Faiza X, an Italian group of special effects people [David Bracci, Carlo Diamantini and Fabrizio Capponi]. This was really the first step for the project. We discussed the effects and realized that it might be an idea

to shoot in Italy and that's how it got started. David Bracci is also working for Stivalenti and he introduced us. I was not a big fan of CGI but we needed three CGI effects for *Demonium* and Sergio did a very good job. He is a very talented and nice person and I was honoured to work with him.

What are your plans for the completed film?

We are currently planning to attend more than twenty festivals worldwide until the end of the year. The film will be offered to distributors and sold on the Mifed in autumn. The script for the next movie [working title *Forever Good-bye*] is almost finished and I hope to start shooting in Spring 2002. This all depends on how *Demonium* does and how busy I will be selling and showing it since I am also the film's producer.

Do you have high expectations?

Honestly, I hope *Demonium* will be seen by a big audience and will be distributed worldwide. This is not just a money matter although the budget is \$1.5 million. I really do believe in this movie and I think everybody should see it. I am confident that people will enjoy it, but don't expect *Karl the Butcher 4*.

For the latest news on *Demonium* and an overview of Schnaas' career be sure to visit [www.anthropproject.de](http://www.anthropproject.de) and [www.demonium-themovie.com](http://www.demonium-themovie.com).

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# Charting the Inner Limits

A new book explores the universes, both physical and metaphysical, of

## STEPHEN KING

by Gemma Files



extensive bibliography of non-fiction hooks and magazine articles which have earned him the title of "master journalist of the dark genres" from industry standbys like *World of Fantasy*.

Most recently, however, Wiaters partnered up with fellow authors Christopher Golden and Hank Wagner to produce *The Stephen King Universe*, which ushers readers through all the fictional hot spots of Stephen King's Maine: Derry, where it's victims float in the "deadlights" of a garbage-baked sewer; Castle Rock, where Johnny Smith once used his Dead Zone-given clairvoyance to track down a particularly "slick!" and slippery serial killer; Haven, (second) home of the fearsomely inventive Tommyknockers; 'Salem's Lot, where the vamps roam.

But the book doesn't just concern itself with mapping out the purely mundane contours of King's literary landscape. Wiaters, Golden and Wagner also go on to peel back the lid of his patented name-brand-rooted "reality", revealing the personalized archetypes lurking beneath: figures brought to full fruition in King's *Dark Tower* fantasy series echo throughout almost every one of King's bestsellers. It's a fascinating achievement, rife with obsessive detail and cumulative resonance – a Stephen King Reader equally accessible to rabid fans and relative novices alike.

Says Wiaters: "The original idea came from my literary agent, Lori Perkins – she'd already approached Chris Golden and me on our own, asking us if we'd be interested in doing a book which would finally connect the dots of all King's work in a really concrete way. Individually, we both knew this was the kind of project that would consume anyone who attempted it – but eventually,

we decided that while we still thought it would be impossible for one person, it might be something that two people could at least try for, together."

Soon enough – "soon" being more like "a year later", in this case – Golden and Wiaters were up to their eyebrows in research material, and desperately in need of a third helping hand. So they invited Wagner to come on board – first as a researcher, then as a full-fledged partner.

"We spent three years of our lives on this project," Wiaters says, "and we had to extend our deadline by a full year – but eventually, we just had to accept the fact that no matter what we did, because of who we were writing about, the book would end up out of date maybe two months after it was first published."

Nevertheless, Wiaters, Golden and Wagner have made a truly valiant stab at chronicling the "prime universe" of a man who – going by output alone – seems to have paid some enterprising young scientist to build him one of those Tommyknocker thought-sampling devices, so he can keep writing even while he's asleep. The chronology at the back of the book goes all the way up to such recent developments as *Dreamcatcher* and the TV miniseries version of *The Talisman*; Wiaters fully expects to be starting into the first of at least four proposed revisions by early 2002.

"Working on this book became sort of a full-time job," Wiaters observes. "And I guess it'll stay that way, for a while – until we renegotiate our contracts, at least."

*The Stephen King Universe*, by Stanley Wiaters, Christopher Golden and Hank Wagner is available in trade paperback from Renaissance Books (\$21.95). Deluxe, signed, limited hardback editions can also be ordered from Cemetery Dance Publications, at a price of \$75.00 each. ☚

It's an easy and cynical putdown of choice to say that "Those who can't write, write about those who can." But this certainly isn't true of Stanley Wiaters, who not only can write screenplays, graphic novel scripts and short stories alike – his online dark fiction showcase *Skin & Bones*, accessible through [www.fearsmag.com](http://www.fearsmag.com), includes his short story "The Toucher," which took top honours at a competition judged by Stephen King himself – but has also carved himself a well-deserved niche playing Boswell to the horror community's collective Dr. Johnson.

As creator/host of the *Dark Dreamers* television series (see *Dreadlines* – RM#18), Wiaters regularly showcases writers both world-famous and soon-to-be; a companion book subtitled *Facing the Masters of Fear*, featuring photographs by Beth Gwinn and an introduction by Clive Barker, was released last month. It's just one more in the

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## RUE MORGUE Visits

# FANTASIA

## 2001

by Rod Gudino

**F**antasia — that's the festival of festivals to lovers of borror, obscure horror, experimental horror and, what the hell, some anime, kung fu and fringe cinema thrown in for good measure. Now in its sixth incarnation, Montreal's movie marathon of the truly macabre, imminently grotesque and inarguably artistic, survived yet another month-long visit by maniacs, fanatics and casual onlookers who congregated from July 10 to 31 in the city's newly renovated Imperial Cinema.

Canada's top horror magazine was there, of course, arriving to the fanfare of around-the-block lineups and from-the-gut intros courtesy of emcee Mitch Davis, a guy whose love of film has turned him into a hyperventilating encyclopedia of all things fringe. Yup, Fantasia was in good hands.

Some ninety films were showcased to upwards of 65,000 people over one month, and *Rue Morgue* was there to unearth the darkest titles from around the world. Many of these films you will not be seeing for a while but, rest assured, we'll be keeping our eyes and ears open and bringing you updated news as it trickles in.

Of note was the Canadian premiere of Larry Fessenden's *Wendigo*, a movie that chronicles several days in the lives of a small family who takes a rural holiday only to run into fears both contemporary and ancient. We were initially acquainted with Fessenden back at Fantasia '98 (see *RM/98*) when the screenwriter/actor/director was premiering his vampire film *Habit* to a very impressed Toronto audience. Continuing his fondness for using monster archetypes as a vehicle for wider dramatic concern, Fessenden uses *Wendigo* to craft an original story about the arbitrary yet circular nature of Fate and a bizarre creature who sometimes appears as a morose man-deer.

"I've made a vampire movie and a Frankenstein story and I've always wanted to make a werewolf type movie and this seemed to be in that mode," Fessenden told *Rue Morgue*. "I've always had tremendous affection for the monster archetypes, and yet as I grew up I became interested in other types of movies, like Scorsese in particular

and other films from the seventies. Somehow, this seemed to be a blend of the two because you have serious themes and yet there's still the haunted quality from the old archetypes."

Keep an eye out for our next issue, when *Rue Morgue* talks to Fessenden in-depth about *Wendigo*, monsters and the allure of horror.

Next up was the world premier of *Jepers Creepers*, which had folks as far away as Texas coming in to take a peek. An unapologetic blockbuster, *Jepers Creepers* was certainly worth the ride (and ride is what you're gonna get — for a full review, check out page 36). This film's got more chills than an icebox in winter and a carnival Barker's sense of using an audience's morbid curiosity against itself. Expect a Halloween release

for what inevitably will be a big draw for MGM Studios.

Troma's Lloyd Kaufman did not disappoint either, with the Canadian premier of *Citizen Toxic: The Toxic Avenger II*, which takes the franchise up a few notches to include school shootings, drug use and several kegfalls of blood. We were fortunate enough to join Kaufman and beautiful CT star Heidi Sijrsen on the Saturday morning of the premiere. True to form, Uncle Lloyd sat us around the table and played back a video from an interview he and Heidi had the previous night, in which Montreal radio couldn't deal with the Tromaia and almost pulled the plug on the interview (they did, in fact, cut Heidi's microphone). We're sure the entire segment will probably end up at [Tromaville.com](http://Tromaville.com), so visit often and look around — it's worth checking out.

Speaking of Troma, *Rue Morgue* got extremely advanced dibs on Toxic's future adventures, namely, *Saving Private Toxic: The Toxic Avenger Part V*. It seems Kauf-



**Midnight Matinee:** The creeps come out in *Jepers Creepers* and (left) a retrospective moment from Larry Fessenden's *Wendigo*.



man and *RM* writer Christopher Heard wasted no time in flushing the goo from their brains to mash together a story which will get Toxic right back to his roots. We're bound by oath not to give the whole thing away, but enough to say that the movie will

## SHORT CUTS

THE FANTASIA HORROR SHORTS 2001

Although most people tend to dismiss short films, there's little doubt that they are the preferred canvas for true visual experimentation. Short yes, but sometimes the tiniest cuts leave the biggest scars....

**CANNIBAL** by Helene Cabet & Bruno Fazzari (Belgium)  
A three-minute homage to Italian giallo via a still-frame montage. Violent and original.

**COMING OUT** by Kim Ji-Woan (South Korea)  
This lengthy (forty-minute) short tells the hilarious tale of a guy who discovers that his sister is a vampire. Sounds overdone but, here, it's anything but.

**EXTREMISM BREAKS MY BALLS** by Nicolas Debort  
An outrageous six-minute film which waits of the perils of adultery. Castration never looked so nice.

**LA TABLE** by Michel Lesny (France)  
An artist overcomes his creative block by opening up his canvas in a way few artists can. Innovative and precisely rendered.

**MISTER E.** by Giulia Frati (Canada)  
It took four years to put the finishing touches on this six-minute chaotic nightmare. Experimental in the extreme, it ventures into a strange rural house in which long-nailed girls and fed-up corpses reside. Weiridly effective.

**OLD BREED** by Ashley Frazier (Newcastle)  
A twelve-minute tale in which a vampire traces her family history. Richly mysterious.

**PAQUES MAR** by Michel Lesny (France)  
A nine-minute condensation of the urban folklore where you wake up only to find that you've been operated on by a sadistic freak. Deliciously unnerving.

**THE BASH** by David Braddy (USA)  
A fable of ecological terror in a toxic rainstorm told in fifteen potent minutes.

**TERRIBLE** by Isabel Gordin (Quebec)  
Evil Dead meets Demons in this outstanding eight-minute tribute to the giallo legacy of Italian horror movies.

**WIDER CHAD VALLEY** by Jeffrey Edwards (Hilmspring)  
Surrealist short about butchers in a dream world where little girls have chattering teeth and fingers get severed. Dark, odd and beautifully shot.

-Emma Anderson

feature an embittered war veteran named Doris Klit and her gang of girlic bikers named The Pink Hole who wage war on Tromaville and take Toxic hostage. Soon Sgt. Kabukiman, Mad Cowboy and Dolphinman join forces with Sgt. Silo, a horribly scarred and crazed soldier and his ragtag platoon, to - what else? - save Private Toxicie! If the finished film is anything like the treatment, you can expect to see plenty of bullets, blood and bare breasts shuffled in with classic film references and a love story, not to mention the triumphant return of Master Bator. Never underestimate these guys! There was some talk of possibly shooting the feature in Toronto, but as of press time nothing was settled. We'll keep the Tromavills among you posted with details as they become available.

Other Fantasia finds: Shimoyama Ten's *Sr. John's Wort*, which was being billed as Japan's answer to *The Blair Witch Project*. The difference is that Ten delivers on the hideous visuals which were left to the imagination by its American cousin, and explores a depth of perversity far beyond the scope of the *Blair Witch*. Shot in a huge, daunting manor with sinister portraits, *Sr. John's Wort* is a masterful movie which - surprisingly - was actually shot on vid.

Also from Japan: Norio Surota's *Kakashi* (*Scarecrow*), an imaginative and atmospheric creepfest from the director of the third *Ringu* film *Ring 0: Birthday*. Tomoya Sato's *L'Ōya* told the unsettling story of a woman who videotapes suicides and makes an unnerving reel which she shows in night-clubs. Other entries from the East included *A Living Hell and Tell Me Something*, both of which have crept into our pages before.

Lovers of international horror also got a chance to celebrate the work of Jose Mojica Marins, a.k.a. Coffin Joe, who was on hand for his first-ever Canadian appearance(!). The event was a screening of *Coffin Joe The Strange World of Mojica Marins*, a documentary on the Latin Ghoulardi by documentarists Andre Barcinski and Ivan Finotti. Fantasia did not pass up the chance to formally introduce Brazul's paranormal cult figure to their audience - they followed up with servings of Joe's 1966 classic *This Night I'll Possess Your Corpse* and 1968's *Night of the Beast*. Pure unbrield Satanic horror!

More Latin terror arrived in the form of Jorgo Olguin's *Angel Negro* (*Black Angel*) which has the distinction of being the first horror feature ever to have been made in Chili. The results are spine tingling in a way that had locals calling up the names of Argento and Hitchcock, and you can bet we'll be bringing you more news down the line from this promising young director.



Nicolas Debort (*Extremism Breaks My Balls*), Giulia Frati (*Mister E.*) and Larry Fessenden (*Wendigo*) at the after party

Never ones to say they don't run a movie for the perverse pleasure of it, Fantasia over-dosed its already blood-soaked patrons with a 35 mm print of *Cannibal Holocaust*, Ruggero Deodato's infamous 1979 exploitation gorefest. To say the film lives up to twenty-two years of notoriety is putting it lightly. If one thing is for sure, it's that *Cannibal Holocaust* endures as an experience that will leave your soul, like your sense of ethics, streaming down your still-shivering pant leg.

In *Slasher\$*, director Maurice Devereaux presented his one act movie in which homicidal maniacs get to practice their trade for a nationally syndicated game show. *Session 9* was director Brad Anderson's eerie haunted house piece, set in the shadowy recesses of the Danvers State Hospital, an abandoned turn-of-the-century asylum.

In Christoph Ali and Nicolas Bonilbours's *Le Rat*, an aging serial killer is haunted by his tortured memories and the corpses of his victims which lie strewn in the forest. Experimental and bloody, it is a film that has a sombre passion sealed into its grimy images.

*Dumb and Dumber's* Jeff Daniels showed a darker side with *Chasing Sleep*, a weird-assed hallucinatory nightmare of a film which seems to have fallen into a complicated release schedule. We'll keep you posted. Andrew Parkanson's *Dead Creatures* was also a standout for sheer originality. Here, cannibal zombies are implied, the depths of the human soul are realized. Slow but profound.

The living dead rose to much applause in Olaf Ittenbach's *Legion of the Dead*, a balls-out blood feast of chopped limbs, decapitations and demonic possession from Germany. Need we say more?

Speaking of more, be sure to drop in at [www.rue-morgue.com](http://www.rue-morgue.com) for regular news updates. Click on the delapidated theatre every Friday. See you in the dark... ☠



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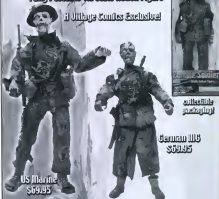
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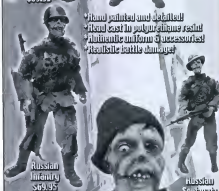


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Davey Havok (far left) in *Son of Sam* and (below) with AFI.

## Graveyard Punk Rock

The second generation of horror punk is upon us and the creepy kids are

summoning new names like AFI and SON OF SAM... by Aaron Lupton

"No there won't be any touring with Son of Sam," says Davey Havok, crushing the black heart of each and every death rocker from Toronto to Death Valley. "There might be another album, but it wouldn't be for a long time. See, Son of Sam is not really a functioning band."

But, God, it's so unfair! The legendary Samhain saw its symbolic demise in 1987 and, since then, the creepy kids have only been treated to a glimpse of the comic-book dark rockers on the minuscule 1999 reunion. That is until now, the point at which our story may unfold.

As the front man for AFI (A Fire Inside), Havok possesses charisma unlike any other frontman in the punk rock arena. Havok's innovation is that he has brought goth, fetish and horror to the unlikely world of skate-punk. It's entirely appropriate, therefore, to hear him talk about the allure that the macabre has always had for him.

"Halloween was my favourite holiday," explains the singer/songwriter. "I was always fascinated by movie monsters, ghosts, the supernatural – things like that. I really liked *The Lost Boys*, the first two *Nightmares*, *The Exorcist*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and the Universal classics like *Dracula*. *Pumpkinhead* was a classic thematically and totally underrated."

Havok's love for horror would soon find an outlet in his enthusiastic support for the music of New Jersey's own Glenn Danzig, known around these parts as Evil Elvis. While the legendary Misfits were instant heroes in Havok's youth, Danzig's further experiments into dark rock became just as endearing, if not more so.

"The Misfits were one of the greatest punk bands," he says, "but I think Samhain were really one of the greatest bands of all time. Their infusion of hardcore, dark rock, and the dark aesthetic was really unique."

Along with Samhain, Havok rocked in his teens to the grim sounds of Christian Death,

Sex Fiend, 45 Grave and others. Even so, it took him and handmates Jade Pudget, Hunter and Adam Carson several albums before they would formally incorporate the flavour of spookiness into their style of punk rock. By the band's third release, *Shut Your Mouth and Open Your Eyes*, the seeds had been sown for what was to come. Along with the requisite black mesh and white makeup came a stage show complete with fog, leering jack-o-lanterns and a chant of "Through our bleeding we are one!" which their fans took up as a kind of rallying cry. The theatrical horror of AFI's act was indeed firmly in place, and it connected with the kids in a way that none of them had anticipated. And although AFI was drawing significantly from the dark punk of their youth, the band was also exploring a different side of the macabre not quite covered by songs which simply paid tribute to classic horror movies.

"I like to write about fear in terms of how people perceive the dark side and the way they perceive things that are evil or wrong or things that invoke fear," says Havok. "I like to write of those things in a way that reveals them to be just the opposite; that they are the positive side, and that they are something that should be embraced, rather than looked down upon. Because, in most cases, fear is the result of something that is misunderstood, rather than something that is really evil."

Ghouls that slay together stay together, so the saying goes, and it came as no surprise that AFI landed a much coveted opening slot for a brief 1999 Samhain reunion tour. At this time, London May (drums, Tiger

lyrics and melodies," explains Havok, "but if you don't like what you hear, we change it. No questions asked." I mean, this was their world, I just wanted to sing in it!

Son of Sam gelled in a ten-day recording frenzy that resulted in a grizzly, gussy piece of basement-punk horror called *Songs From the Earth*. The elements were all there; chainsaw guitars, gang-chant vocals in a mismatch of old school punk blitzkrieg, gothic charm, and Danzig-style blues. (Glenn himself would make an appearance playing guitar on *Stray* and the title track.) As if hounded by an unearthly force, Son of Sam distilled the collective gloominess of their collective Halloween to produce an album of pure death rock.

But if there never is another Son of Sam record, at least A Fire Inside will continue to burn; the group expects to enter the studio yet again in late autumn. And if Son of Sam remains but a tombstone in death rock's hallowed cemetery, its brief ghost-like appearance certainly proves one thing: that others like it will come later.

"If you look at punk rock right now, that infusion of darkness into the aesthetic has really just died for the most part," says Havok. "Most dark music nowadays is labeled as 'gothic', which never existed ten years ago. Right now there are very few punk rock bands that are doing this, and maybe it just so happens that we're one of them. But you take a look at our audiences – they're identifying with it." ■

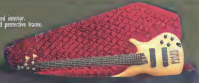


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## TROMAVILLE 1, MIDDLE AMERICA 0

### Citizen Toxic: The Toxic Avenger Part IV

Starring David Matney and Heidi Szarsen plus a bunch of cool cameos

Directed by Lloyd Kaufman

Written by Trent Haaga, Patrick Cassidy, Gabriel Friedman and Lloyd Kaufman

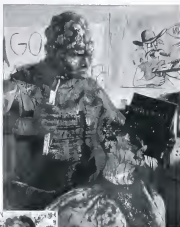
Troma Entertainment

"But will it be worth the wait?" That question has been on the minds, lips and other parts of Tromaniacs worldwide for a long time now. Well, I watched an advance copy of *Citizen Toxic* alone several nights ago and watched it again with friends this afternoon, and aside from a few minor quibbles, my own answer is an unequivocal "fuckin'-A!"

Before the opening credits roll, a preamble brings us up to speed regarding Toxic's origins, then dismisses Parts 2 and 3 as crap, apologizes for them and assures us that "this is the REAL sequel!" I've never seen Part 3, but I must admit that I quite enjoyed Part 2 since, among other things, it features a lot of naked Japanese women.

But I digress.... All's well in Tromaville, New Jersey until Toxic tries to stop a school shooting spree which culminates in a massive explosion that rips a hole in the fabled time-space continuum. Toxic and two retarded kids are sucked into Amortville, Tromaville's counterpart in an alternate universe, while on the other side Tromaville is terrorized by Toxic's evil doppelgänger, the Noxious Offender. Shit happens, as the saying goes, but there's some shit that could only ever happen in Tromaville.

It's hard to resist this setup, but herein lies my only serious complaint: such a transition is a tricky narrative stunt and in this particular case it's so sloppily executed that it takes about fifteen minutes for the film to find its legs again. Once the hugs are ironed out,



*A Day in Tromaville: Toxic to the rescue and (inset) an off-camera Noxie hangs with a pre-dead Julie Strain.*

however, we're treated to everything we could ever ask from a Troma film and more, plus a bit more in case of emergencies. In fact, *Citizen Toxic* melds perfectly with recent Troma efforts *Tromeo and Juliet* and *Terror Firmer* in a kind of self-awareness triptych, in which Lloyd Kaufman, Michael Herz and their band of merry shit-disturbers really hit their stride on just about every level.

For decades now, Troma's been (in)famous for bombarding audiences with kinky sex and cartoonishly gratuitous violence while fearlessly skewering Corporate

America and the political and religious right. However, these last three films are so intensely and deliciously anarchic that just about all Troma's previous efforts fairly shrivel in comparison. (Interestingly, practically all the players from *Terror Firmer* show up at one point or another in *Citizen Toxic*, although Will Keenan and Alyce Latosurelle are conspicuously absent.)

Like all the best Troma films, *Citizen Toxic* pushes just about every hot button imaginable - school shootings, racial violence, our squeamishness about physical and mental disabilities, the continuing abortion debate and lots more - while hlugdeoning us with one revolting spectacle after another. And yet, in typical Troma fashion, it manages in the midst of all this to be strangely heartfelt and uplifting, not to mention convulsively funny. When the severed limbs have been swept away, the bodily fluids mopped up and the fart gas cleared from the room, it's plain to see that Troma continues to fight the good fight.

-John W. Bowen

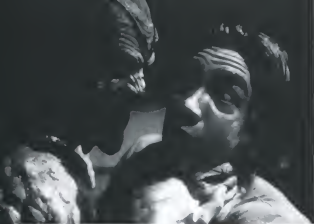
## A FRANCHISE IS BORN

### Jeebers Creepers

Starring Gina Phillips, Justin Long and Jonathan Breck

Written and directed by Victor Salva  
United Artists/MGM

Big studio horror films are an odd breed. Usually, they compromise too many cool plot points by hewing to the perceived needs of a general audience and the script demands of their leading stars. Usually they're targeted to teens, which means they have teens in them which, again, is usually not a good thing. And although everyone loves a gaily pleasure, major studio horror films don't usually even aspire to that, being content to tally up the first weekend and let hygones be hygones. The thing that multi-million dollar scare fests do have, however, is the multi-million dollars, which means that though your brain could be turning to porridge by the dulllest most invidiously lame storyline ever witnessed, your eyes are



**Jeepers Creepers:** The summer's major studio scarefest, one shiver at a time.

on the roller coaster ride of their lives.

*Jeepers Creepers* is the kind of film that goes out of its way to set up shop in blockbuster territory, only to turn left at the pass and end up in a wooded area thick with creepy crawlies. Yes it boasts teen leads, but no they aren't played by big stars, but yes they do things no one would ever do in real life (like pass by an abandoned church where some guy was dumping bodies into a drainage pipe and later go back to confirm it). But even with situations we've seen before, writer/director Victor Salva (*Clownhouse*) manages to pull one dead rabbit out of the hat after another in what becomes a macabre showpiece that only horror buffs could really enjoy.

*Jeepers Creepers* doesn't bother with preliminaries: teens Trish and Dary (actually, brother and sister, so no protracted scenes of adolescent puppy love here) drive through country backroads on a visit to their parents' house. They have a run-in with a jollopie from hell and later witness its tall, dark occupant disposing of several bodies wrapped in blood-soaked sheets. They go back and blow a few good scares as Dary makes his way down the pipe only to uncover a vast and grisly cave packed with half embalmed human remains. How Salva manages these sequences, however, is really what counts; every footstep is a moment of strained suspense that culminates in a triumph of truly grotesque ingenuity.

Actually, there are more than a few tricks to this movie, but audiences are only asked to know one: that you can't walk into a film called *Jeepers Creepers* and expect to see *The Exorcist*. We're the first to admit that funny horror films are a symptom of the artistic anorexia that has assailed Hollywood schmucks who want to turn everything into

a joke, but allowances have to be made if the joke is good. So the creeper from *Jeepers Creepers* likes old records, but so what? Who's going to admit they didn't like *Return of the Living Dead?* Or *Tremors?* Or *Prom Night III?*

Salva, who will spend a lot of interview time fielding questions about his fondness for young boys and his subsequent time in the clink, has undoubtedly invested more than a psycheque into his film. And it shows. *Jeepers Creepers* was a howling crowd pleaser at this year's Fantasia Festival (see page 31), a crowd that ought to know. If your midnight matinee calls for a lighthearted but creepy monster movie, make it this one and save up for the popcorn. You're going to need it.

-Rod Gudino

## GOTHIQUE NOUVEAU

### The Others

Starring Nicole Kidman, Aikina Mann

and James Bentley

Written and directed by Alejandro

Amenábar

Alliance Atlantis

There's something about a gothic story — the palefaced aristocrats, the old dark house, the buried secret — that works no matter how many times it gets told. And it's a story that's been told quite a few times; its latest incarnation is *The Others*, an ironic little flick considering it stars Nicole Kidman and is produced by Tom Cruise, keepers of domestic secrets themselves. Thing is, I forgot about all that in the first five minutes, which is entirely a good thing.

*The Others* opens up the gothic melodrama of a woman named Grace (Kidman) who

resides with her two children in a gloomy mansion of locked doors and curtained windows. Apparently, the children are afflicted by a curious disease which forbids them to be exposed to natural light, and so they while away their days in a perpetual night of candles and the religious oppression of their mother, who is clearly in knots over her husband's prolonged absence.

Enter a trio of servants; a kindly butler, his matronly wife and their mute daughter who skulks through corridors that whisper when no one is there. Soon, doors are left unlocked, footsteps are heard in empty rooms and the piano begins to play on its own. Worst of all, the kids begin to talk about a little boy and a strange old woman who have taken residence in the house.

Writer/director Alejandro Amenábar (*Tejido* a.k.a. *Snuff*) uses *The Others* as a showcase of overthought gothic visuals; a perpetual fog creeps over the courtyard, tall windows stare out like soulless eyes and pale faces peer out of the whispering darkness. Amenábar tells his story in hushed tones and lingering silences, suffocating the audience in a thick blanket of walled up darkness and off camera ghosts.

But even though it spooked the hell out of me a couple of times, *The Others* was short of perfect; the house's inner darkness may have been impenetrable, but this particular family's secrets weren't. Kidman, who is an elegant mannequin at the best of times, didn't have the range required for the role of an overprotective mother who is teetering into madness. And, most grievously perhaps, is that the story took a seriously long time to set itself up.



**The Others:** A dysfunctional family in a house full of ghosts.

Still, lurking within the hidden rooms of this old house were a few spine-chilling moments, each like a cold hand grabbing you in the dark. *The Others* drew more than its share from *Burnt Offerings*, *The Haunting* and *The Sixth Sense* but, when you think about it, those are three damn good movies to use for inspiration.

-Emma Anderson

## TOO MUCH BLOOD OR NOT ENOUGH?

**Faust: Love of the Damned**

Starring Mark Frost, Andrew Divoff and Jeffrey Combs

Directed by Brian Yuzna

Written by David Quinn

Lions Gate Home Video

*Faust* was a landmark for independent comics. The stories were expansive and filled with rich characters, but what most fans remember is the artwork by Tim Vigil which was so intricately detailed that the book was only published once a year. Adapting such an immense storyline into a two-hour movie seems daunt-

ing, but Brian Yuzna (the driving force behind *Re-Animator* and *The Dentist*) seems to have once again accomplished the impossible. *Faust: Love of the Damned* is a fun, energetic film that steams forward at such a frantic pace that there isn't much time to consider its flaws.

Mark Frost plays John Jaspers, a man who vows to avenge the brutal death of his girlfriend. Jaspers is soon visited by the mysterious M, a role that Andrew (*Wishmaster*) Devoff plays with devilish delight. M makes Jaspers an offer he can't refuse, and gives him superhuman powers in exchange for his soul.

As a comic book movie, *Faust* draws liberally from what's available: the titular characters sport retractable claws like Wolverine, a huge red cape like Spawn, and a red rubber suit like a *Power Rangers* villain. Not to mention the fact that the entire thing is based on a centuries-old folk tale. However, all these elements are combined with a story that moves at a breakneck pace, and what results is hugely entertaining.

Having packed thrills, chills and nipples into his flick, it's a tough call to say that



*Faust: Thrills, chills and nipples*

Brian Yuzna has lost his touch for incredible visuals. Everywhere he injects a hyperactive style into both the camera work and the editing. There's also plenty of gore, including eye gougings, beheadings, cannibalism and bloody stabbings. The film's most extreme set piece, involving a melting semi-nude woman, will undoubtedly have your jaw dropping to the floor. David Frost, who wrote the original comic book, included a lot of laughable melodramas in his screenplay, but that's a quibble. *Faust* has terrific atmosphere and Yuzna delivers the eye candy in a way that made us forget he ever had anything to do with *Progeny* (see *RM99*).

-Pete Sankey

## BLAIR WITCH REDUX

**Flesh Freaks**

Starring Eshe Mercer-James, Eran Muskatm and Ronny Varno

Written and directed by Conall Pendergast

Sub Rosa Studios

That *The Blair Witch Project* would be the springboard to hundreds of imitations was unavoidable, but this film goes one step further, incorporating actual documentary footage of an archaeological dig into the plot! And it works! A secret research expedition into the jungle of

Belize accidentally uncovers worm-like parasites deep in the bottom an ancient Mayan well. Brought back to the cold climate of Toronto, the parasites awaken and begin to infest the denizens of an unnamed university. A group of classmates soon find themselves facing a shambling horde of murderous zombies, bent on protecting their secret presence in order to populate all of humanity!

*Flesh Freaks* is surprisingly well made for what is obviously an extremely low-budget amateur production. The story is solid and relatively original, apocalyptic in nature but not reaching beyond the \$1 budget. The gore is goopy and copious, highlighting a satisfying amount of zombie action and the makeup recalls the paper mache zombies of Andrea Bianchi's gutmunch classic *Borsal Ground* (*Le notte del terrore*). Of note is that these particular zombies do not feed on human flesh, sharing a kinship to the radioactive zombies of Lenzi's oatmeal-faced *City of the Walking Dead*. These two zombie classics bear mentioning because they have been an obvious influence on this movie.

Due to Canada's restrictive gun control laws, there are no handguns in the movie; instead of head shots, zombies are dispatched by having broom handles, crow bars and other sundry items rammed through their skulls. The most striking aspect of *Flesh Freaks* is the considered cinematography; director Pendergast utilizes a wide palette of digital video FX and uses deft lighting and camera tricks to help advance the story and augment some of the amateur makeup. Most importantly, the image quality is consistent throughout. Overall, an impressive little film that defies its minuscule budget. Also worthy of mention is the lurid video cover art, a disgusting collage of withered and rotted zombie heads!

-The Gore-met

## SO BAD IT'S... NOT SO BAD, REALLY

**Blood Surf**

Starring Dax Miller, Katie Fischer and

Matt Borienghi

Directed by James D.R. Hickox

Written by Sam Bernard & Robert L. Levy  
Tnmark Home Video

Over the last year or so, it seems like every otherwise-impeccable issue of *Rue Morgue* has been blithely missed by at least one unflattering review of a Giant Mutant Animal movie. Practically all of these films come from Lions Gate, and our responses have ranged from tepid (Joe O'Brien goes easy on the dreadful *Crocodile* out of respect for the venerable but wayward Toho Hooper) to vitriolic (Brad Aheraham, Eric Sparring and myself get medieval on *Shark Attack*, *Otopus* and *Spiders*, respectively). While the doofuses (dooff?) at Lions Gate were grunting out the aforementioned solid waste products, their counterparts at Tnmark were hard at work on *Blood Surf*, a film so astounding, deliriously falling-on-its-ass awful as to rival *Battlefield Earth*. And for exactly this reason, those of you with a penchant for camp may just want to check it out.

A couple of numbskull surfer dudes and a film crew arrive in Australia to shoot a doc-



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**Blood Beach:** Based on a true story.

umentary about the latest craze in "extreme sports", pursuits Stephen King once described as "a good way to get some dreck out of the gene pool." Yes folks, this is Blood Surfing, in which participants draw their own

blood and ride the waves while dodging killer sharks. All goes well until sharks and humans alike start getting munched by a thirty-foot, 3000-pound salt water crocodile. No, I'm not just making this up as I go along. And yes, Rod, that means you actually have to pay me for writing it.

Oh, the wonders you'll witness, Gentle Reader! See! A mechani-croc that seems to have great difficulty in actually moving its legs, opting instead to be dragged along the ground by crew members who barely manage to stay out of the shot! Hear! The dying words of *Blood Surf's* Quint/Abab stand-in after he's been bitten in half: "Damn you to hell!" Ogle! Lotsa gratuitous nudity! (Of course, none of it involves the film's only name star, Tara "I'm not an actor, but I play one on TV" Read.) Groove! On that cool-as-fuck surf tune that plays over the closing credits! Run! To the home vid outlet of your choice! Rent! *Blood Surf!* Before! I abuse any more exclamation marks!

-John W. Bowen

## BLEEDIN' IN THE WIND

### The Mutilation Man

Starring Jim Van Bebber, Terek Puckett and Jolie Scott  
Written and directed by Andy Copp  
Sub Rosa Studios

I can honestly say I have never seen a film like *The Mutilation Man*. That's not to say it's one of the best films I've ever seen, but definitely it is one of the most unique. Essentially an arty gore

film dressed up like a music video, *The Mutilation Man* is the tale of one man's journey on the road to redemption. Only for this man, that trip means sliced flesh, ripped-out piercings, and self-cannibalism.

There are two parts to *The Mutilation Man*; the present, shot in 16mm, and flashback sequences shot in Super 8 and occasionally on video. The present details the life of Ian, a man with a history of brutal abuse, who walks an American wasteland performing impromptu spectacles of self-mutilation for the degenerate masses. These shows serve as his confessional, as Ian attempts to pay for the sins of his father, an alcoholic who repeatedly beat and raped both his son and his wife, and who at one point even forced Ian to bury the corpse of his murdered mother. Those nightmares are depicted in a hazy Super 8, with Jim Van Bebber doing a disturbingly accurate portrayal of the father. Throughout his travels, *Mutilation Man* meets both the devil (in the form of a kinky goth chick), and an angel who finally leads him to peace after a brutal and somewhat confusing finale in which audience members turn on each other in a massive bloodbath.

*The Mutilation Man* is a rare example of a

film in which cinematography is perhaps the main character. The majority of the film comes across as a coarse vapor of earthy tones and reds, with painful facial expressions and over-the-top gore at the centre of the attention. Overtop is a very Skinny Puppy-like soundtrack with the musical screams of anguish often filling in for dialogue. In fact, there is no other dialogue in *The Mutilation Man*. Again, flashbacks are done in Super 8, sometimes in black and white, and often depict abstract imagery that is left to the audience to decipher. While all of this may sound like blatant art film technique, the film does stray from the classification with its love of gore and its white trash sensibilities.

Some have compared this film to *Tetris*: *The Iron Man*, and I suppose that works to a small degree, but *The Mutilation Man* is really on another plane completely, its morose tone and standard B-film qualities contrasting the manic frenzy of the futuristic *Tetris*. No, *Mutilation Man* really is one of the few films - genre and otherwise - that we can truly call unique. Again, that's not to say it's a great film, but for those who dig a side of artist with their splatter or who just have a taste for the fringe, it is a must-must-see.

-Aaron Lupton

## STRANGER THAN OPRAH

### The Stranger

Starring William Atherton, Roxana Zal and Robert Cuccioli  
Directed by Bruce David Klein  
Written by Elliot Geisinger and Bruce David Klein  
Fusion Films

The cover promised a "gripping suspense thriller... *Amityville* meets *Sixth Sense*", but I don't remember wanting to smash my head through an iron plate halfway through either of those movies. They were thoughtful and creepy, but this straight-to-video dud has

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more in common with trashy Joan Collins romance novels.

Roxana Zai is Juliet, a woman who seems to have everything – a beautiful house, three luxury cars, two cute little girls, and a loving husband, played by William “I was in *Ghostbusters*” Atherton. While sailing in her yacht one day, she accidentally knocks her daughter overboard and watches as the girl drowns. Juliet is overcome with guilt until a mysterious stranger with a heavy accent, played by Robert Cuccioli, delivers a doll house for the little girl. He convinces Juliet to keep it, which affords them the opportunity to have many insipid conversations about “the longing for passion”. Almost immediately she begins having lusty fantasies about the man. She fears that if she cannot control her urges around this Italian stallion, she may suffer a fate similar to her mother’s, who was shot dead after being caught in the arms of another man.

*The Stranger* is too flat to be considered a thriller, too tame to be considered softcore porn, and far too dull to even be bothered with. The slow pacing robs the movie of any tension, and by the end there’s more weeping and emotional feely stuff than a typical episode of *Oprah*. Some nice locations in Europe make for a few pretty pictures, but the film has no real style and it gets far too bogged down by long-winded scenes. William Atherton’s inclusion is especially bizarre; after all,

who honestly believes Juliet would pass over a hunk with a ponytail for him?

The steamy climax is worth a few giggles, but it’s no more passionate than standard soap opera fare. The scariest thing about *The Stranger* is how badly its cover purposely misleads; there’s nothing gripping or terrifying about this over-melodramatic drivel.

-Pete Sankey

## EVIL GETS AN OIL CHANGE

**Mechanical Warrior Hakaider**  
Starring Hiroshi Matsumoto,  
Kazuhiro Inoue and Mai Hoshō  
Directed by Kenta Amamiya  
Written by Yoshinori Kitase  
based on a story by Shotaro  
Ishinomori  
Tokyo Shock

Even if you’re a mega-fan of Japanese sci-fi, you may not remember the name Hakaider. Even so, in the seventies he was one of the most popular characters on Japanese television, as the arch-nemesis cyborg of Kikaider, the good robot after which the show was named. If you are a fan, it probably doesn’t matter though, because the modern day Hakaider (Hakas meaning destroy) has been souped up, dimmed down, and wholly recreated as a futuristic saviour in a world of Milton-esque archetypes and really cheesy special effects. Unfortunately, this attempt to modernize the character is met with failure in the face of the reality that says it’s hard to make a serious parable out of *Voltron* action figures.

Some time in the future, the populace of the questionably named Jesus Town is ruled by the iron fist of their conservative leader, a man who secures peace through all sorts of violent acts, like lobotomizing free thinkers. The establishment is uniformly white, and is protected by a white and silver robot with angel wings. Meanwhile, a group of underground rebels, cloaked in black, plan an uprising with the newfound help of the almighty ass-kicking Hakaider. Things go pretty predictably from there.

So what does it say that an old TV villain has been brought back as a knight in shining armour against a symbolically holy and



**Hakaider: Power Rangers meets The Last Temptation of Christ.**

wholly repressive society? Notbing that hasn’t been said before, I guess. That the system sucks and villains are cool isn’t exactly groundbreaking, especially after a decade of action anti-heroes *Spawn* and the *Crow* gaining massive popularity within the genre.

Of course, none of this is really bad, nor does it do damage to the quality of this film. What really breaks *Hakaider*’s balls is that it’s so damn goofy. The action sequences are PG-friendly, while the costumes and effects are just too laughable to be taken seriously. Some may say that’s the point, but I doubt it; try to picture what it would be like if the *Power Rangers* showed up at the end of *The Last Temptation of Christ*.

Talented director Amamiya maintains his strong sense of style, but seems out of his element here. Only a few flashback dream sequences which reminded me of *Cemetery Man* really raise this film from your average, everyday cheesy Japanese sci-fi show. *Hakaider* may be an attempt at “brazier” action hero fluff, but *Camera 3*, this ain’t. Check out Amamiya’s superior *Moon over Tao*, also available from Tokyo Shock.

-Aaron Lupton



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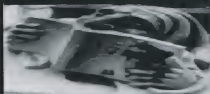
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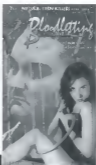
### Bloodletting

Starring Ariana Albright and James L. Edwards  
Written and directed by Matthew Jason Walsh  
Tempe Video

In a set-up that admittedly smacks of a certain Stephen King novella, Serena (Albright, who also co-produced) corners notorious serial killer Butch (Edwards) and half-black-

mails/half-seduces him into taking her on as his apprentice. What ensues is basically *Apt Pupil* meets *Natural Born Killers* in lo-fi as told by Kevin Smith: a whole lotta murderin', mutilatin' and mayhem interspersed with heated debates over the nebulous protocols of serial murder.

Some of these diatribes work much better than others, but the performances by both the principals and



supporting players (including Sascha Graham, Tina Krause and *Psycho Sisters* director Pete Jacelone) are strong enough to keep things moving. And while writer/director Walsh laddles out the gore with merry abandon (gotta love the Amazing Exploding Baby sequence!) and doesn't shy away from nasty humour, *Bloodletting* is at heart a cautionary fable about the destructive potential of simple loneliness. The bonus: that rarest of rarities, a twist ending you won't actually see

coming. (Well, at least I sure didn't.)

If microbudget shot-on-vid horror is to remain viable, a lot of filmmakers would do well to study the ways in which *Bloodletting* compensates for its low production values with solid performances and tight scripting, neither of which costs a dime. The most common downfall of these backyard projects is that they simply haven't been sufficiently thought out in pre-production; seat-of-the-pants filmmaking has doubtless resulted in some of the genre's greatest works, but too many aspiring auteurs these days seem to miss the point and embrace incompetence for its own sake. Happily, this isn't the case with *Bloodletting*, which works primarily because it's so much more tightly focused than most of its peers.

-John W. Bowen

## MY PARENTS WENT TO HOLLYWOOD AND ALL I GOT WAS THIS LOUSY MOVIE

### American Vampire

Starring Carmen Elektra, Trevor Lissauer and Adam West  
Directed by Luis Estaban  
Written by Rolin Jarrett  
Maverick Entertainment

There are those of us out there who would argue a great portion of horror flicks boast little merit beyond appealing to the jack-off fantasies of twelve-year-old boys. By the look of it, I pegged

*American Vampire* starring, er... featuring, Carmen (I married a famous person) Elektra as a profound example of this trend popularized by the '80s slasher craze. The reality of it, though, is a fluffy vampire comedy set in the beaches of California. Basically a brainless teenage farce that, thankfully, doesn't feature Elektra as a major player.

*American Vampire* is actually about a guy named Frankie, who looks a lot like Mark Wahlberg, but isn't. When his parents jet off for a fabulous European vacation, they foolishly entrust him with their very enormous, very expensive beach-front condo. On the flawed advice of his stoner bud Bogie - who looks a lot like Johnny Depp but isn't - Frankie invites a trio of strung out California bloodsuckers to crash at the place for a while. The two daft bombshells and Moondoggie, an aging surfer vampire - who looks a lot like Richard Lewis but isn't - pretty much negate the theory that vampires make great houseguests.

They're messy, stay up all night and probably don't flush, but when they start mooching off the blood of his friends, it's the final straw. Frankie bumps into a Donald Sutherland look-alike who sends him to the Big Kahuna, an old hippy vampire hunter who looks a lot like Adam West, and actually is. Together they stumble their way into saving America's beaches from those bloodsuckers for bloody good.

For some reason, I can't think of one really good vampire comedy out there and I'm talking about the kind of movie where the focus is clearly more on the comedy than the horror (*Fright Night* doesn't technically count, although I'd recommend renting it ten times before even considering *American Vampire*). There may yet be one great vamparody out there somewhere, but when your sub-genre classics include *Once Bitten* and *Krusty Swanson's Buffy*, it's time to rethink the premise. What about a bulimic cannibal? Gay Frankenstein? Jason in space? Aw fuck it.

-Tom Dragomir

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### Dracula 2000

Starring Justine Waddell, Gerard Butler and Christopher Plummer  
Directed by Patrick Lussier  
Written by Joel Soisson  
Alliance Atlantis

Unlike the majority of my *RM* peers, I haven't entirely given up on the idea that modern filmmakers can riff off of Stoker's done-to-death classic with any success, but the chances of a revived *Dracula* coming from a major company are pretty slim. Nevertheless, the makers of *Dracula 2000* felt they were onto something when they put their film together, though we suspect some



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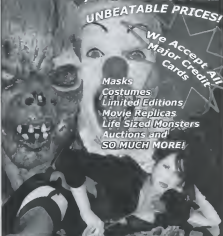
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**Dracula 2000:** Still last year's mashed potatoes, even on video.

second-guessing delayed the project so that most people saw it in early 2001.

Judging from the results, *Dracula 2000* was hired in that most frightening of places, the corporate

boardroom. Execs lined up a fulproof plan for reintroducing the original vamp to the new millennium: cast a Vangelis-look-alike in the titular role; secure a corporate sponsor and liberally splatter their logo throughout the film; throw in Schwarzenegger-style one-liners as a prelude to overdone action sequences and, lastly, pay Wes Craven an undisclosed amount for the rights to put his name on the results. All things told a fail-safe plan. Unless, of course, you're making a good horror film, in which case it isn't very fail-safe now, is it?

Despite less than honourable intentions, it wouldn't be fair to say that no cool ideas managed to worm their way into *Dracula 2000*. It turns out that Van Helsing has been keeping his nemesis imprisoned in a sealed coffin, and has kept himself alive by shooting small doses of vampire blood into his veins. This causes a few complications when he has a child (part vampire) who finally discovers the origins of the real Dracula: he is in fact Judas Iscariot, the very one who traded Jesus' life for thirty silver coins (which explains why he hates crosses and silver, but

not garlic). In the end Drac is finally put to rest, Van Helsing is killed and the winner proves to be Virgin Megastore, suppliers of fine audio/visual product at less than reasonable prices.

-Emma Anderson

## THE TOO LITTLE TOO LATE PROJECT

**Strawberry Estates**  
Starring Jason Reed and  
Chrissy Frick  
Written and directed by  
Ron Bonk  
Sub Rosa Studios

If substance abuse hasn't rendered it too difficult, cast your mind back to the summer of '99. Remember how we all braced ourselves for the inevitable onslaught of *Blair Witch* knock-offs in the wake of that film's runaway success? Well, it never really happened, did it? The ensuing period saw one or two pale imitators like *The St. Francisville Experiment* and a small handful of parodies. A year ago, the ill-advised *Blair Witch 2* came with a bang and went with a whimper. *Blair Witch* will probably always enjoy a prestigious spot in horror history, but events (or rather non-events) of the last two years would indicate that its popularity won't nec-

essarily mean influence. I had personally hoped that its success might rekindle widespread interest in independent horror films, or perhaps even nudge Hollywood toward actually making some interesting and innovative horror again. But no - the indies still struggle in obscurity and the big studios have gone right back to churning out shitty Horror Lite<sup>®</sup> just as if nothing had ever happened.

All this makes *Strawberry Estates* - a *Blair Witch*-style mockumentary about ghost hunting in an abandoned mental hospital - something of an anomaly, especially in terms of timing. Of course, with primitivism being an integral part of such a film, it's not surprising that it would be undertaken by a mainstay of the lo-fi scene like Ron Bonk. What's baffling is that he's chosen to deviate from some of the principles of the archetype, most notably in that the dialogue in *Strawberry Estates* isn't improvised and much of the action seems quite deliberately choreographed. The film is also hampered by some truly dreadful performances, normally an occupational hazard in low-budget horror but absolute poison in a mockumentary.

Nonetheless, when *Strawberry Estates* occasionally works, it works remarkably well, delivering some truly jarring shocks.

Besides, it's no mean feat to incorporate clever visual nods to both *Halloween* and *Rear Window* into a film shot entirely on handheld video. While it's plain that the pseudo-documentary format lends itself to visceral chills in much the same way that it works for comedy in *Spinal Tap* and *Best in Show*, I'd never deny that Bonk is a talented filmmaker (see Andrew Bailes' review of Bonk's clever psychological thriller *The Vicious Sweet* in RM#14). It's just a shame that the genuine jolts in this effort are surrounded by so many groin-inducing flaws.

-John W. Bowen



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Haunted World: The Inimitable Ed Wood

## "LOOK BACK IN ANGORA"

The Haunted World of Edward D. Wood With Mailla "Vampira" Nurni, Dolores Fuller and Conrad Brooks  
Written and directed by Brett Thompson  
The Wade Williams Collection

Longtime readers of *Rue Morgue* will know that many of its staff have a fondness for Ed Wood, deemed "worst director of all time" in the days before Michael Bay and Joel Schumacher were squeezing them out. The mind behind such dubious genre classics *Bride of the Monster* and *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, Wood's films are defined by ludicrous plotting, atrocious dialogue and a delirious lack of coherence... so why, more

than twenty years after his death, is he such a fascinating character?

The *Haunted World of Edward D. Wood, Jr.* examines the, uh, distinguished career of "the Orson Welles of low-budget pictures". Mostly comprised of interviews with those that knew and worked with Wood, what emerges is a portrait of a man who was a walking contradiction. Misunder-

stood genius or talentless hack? Depends on whom you ask.

Wood starlets Dolores Fuller and Loretta

King describe him as a sweet and kind man, while Bela Lugosi Jr. is less impressed, claiming that Wood exploited his father in the twilight years of his life simply to get the financing he needed for his films. Through these interviews, scenes from his films and archival footage, Wood emerges as a man passionate about his art, willing to do anything and everything he had to

in order to tell what emerged to be highly personal stories, most notably the infamous cross-dressing opus *Glen or Glenda*.

Obviously *The Haunted World...* will be of most interest to the legion of Wood devotees seeking enlightenment about this enigmatic director. Fans of Tim Burton's biopic will also be interested just to see what that film misrepresented about this largely unknown man. What he lacked in talent he made up for in passion, and that is why Edward D. Wood, Jr. endures when so many of his more respected contemporaries have long since been forgotten.

-Brad Abraham

## A PAIN IN THE NECK

*Rockabilly Vampire*

Starring Margaret Lancaster, Paul Stevenson and Stephen Blascokhart  
Directed by Lee Bennett Sobel  
Written by Lee Bennett Sobel and Paul Gambino  
A Troma Team Release

There has been such a glut of awful vampire movies over the past decade that you have to wonder if the genre has any steam left. That said, Troma can always be counted on for the most outrageous, wildly imaginative movies on the video shelf, regardless of subject matter. True to form, their *Rockabilly Vampire* manages to put a fantastic twist on tired old vampire clichés, but its slow pace and surprising lack of gore still leaves a lot to be desired.

Margaret Lancaster plays Iris, a woman



obsessed with the fifties and anxious to prove that Elvis is still alive and well (you mean, he isn't? -Ed). Unfortunately, it seems that everyone she meets is a diehard Beatle-maniac or just wishes she would get with the times. Things seem hopeless, until Iris encounters a dead ringer for the King, played by Paul Stevenson, who was bitten by a vampire on his way to an Elvis look-alike contest back in '56. Now that the pompadoured bohunk is loose in Manhattan, he's looking for a hunka hunka burnin' love.

There is a lot to like about *Rockabilly Vampire*. It's got some hilarious dialogue, it picks apart fifties nostalgia with precision, and it is filled with original, memorable characters. The soundtrack is pretty cool too, with the rockabilly sounds of the Frantic Flatpops, Voodoo Swing, and The Royal Crowns.

Nonetheless, the movie is a disappointment since it's essentially goreless, a fact that drains most of the excitement out of the story. As a result, the film drags and the amateur cast can't quite sustain interest for an hour and a half. Had director Lee Bennett Sobel used a little less restraint and allowed the blood to flow by the bucketful, *Rockabilly Vampire* could have been spectacular. As it stands it's an amusing little film, but only fans who appreciate low-budget independent filmmaking will be able to sit through the whole thing.

-Pete Sankey

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# WET NIGHTMARES

## ALL-GIRL CASTS BEDEVIL THE LATEST SOFTCORE SENDUPS



**Erotic Witch Project 2: Book of Seduction**  
Starring Darian Caine, Katie Jordan and A.J. Khan

Directed by John Bacchus  
Written by John Bacchus and Michael Beckerman  
Seduction Cinema/El Cinema

**Lust for Frankenstein**  
Starring Michelle Bauer, Lina Romay and Amber Newman  
Written and directed by Jess Franco  
Shock-O-Rama Cinema/El Cinema

Sexploitation movies really have something over most other kinds of films. In their own loveable way they prove to be masters of comedy, providing hours of laughs through cheap sex and cheaper effects. Lovers of horror may well get behind these porn parodies of scare flicks new and old. Today's recipe: some girl-girl-girl titillation courtesy of the folks at El Cinema, who have been cultivating a brand of cinema that undoubtedly will leave viewers scared stiff.

*Erotic Witch Project 2*, directed by John Bacchus and brought to you by El's girl-on-girl Seduction Cinema line, is as tongue in cheek (and other moist body parts) as soft-core porn inevitably is. Starring Darian Caine and Katie Jordan, 2 takes place at the Khan Institute for Mental Health which houses Darian - one of the three girls who originally went to the Bacchusville Woods looking for the Erotic Witch. Still possessed by a lingering nymphomania from her

adventure there, Darian seduces and infects all who come in contact with her with an insatiable girl lust that can only be appeased through constant sex.

Plot twist two has Darian's condition attracting a journalist and her cameraman looking for a story, and though the cameraman is never onscreen, he almost steals the show with his macho comments about the goings-on at the institute. The story is rounded out by a repeat performance of the sex-crazed gorilla from part one (who seems to want to jump anyone he sees), and a detective looking for the cause of the mass masturbations happening in the Bacchusville Woods.

All in all, *Erotic Witch 2* is a laugh-out-loud sex-fest that rises above the average softcore out there and manages to poke fun at both horror and porn flicks, though this being an all-girl bonanza there is no actual poking involved.

Jess Franco's *Lust for Frankenstein*, on the other hand, is funny for all the wrong reasons... and much naughtier as a result. Some of the actors really should have kept their clothes on, though I guess the fact that they didn't upped the horror content and/or turned their sex scenes into groaning jokes. Adding to it is a prevalent thick European accent from members of the cast, which makes for incomprehensible dialogue that's doubly funny because the acting is so dead serious.

*Lust* follows Moira (Lina Romay), the daughter of an infamous reanimator descended from the original Dr. Frankenstein. Having been sexually mistreated during her formative years by her evil stepmother, Moira escapes to an unhappy marriage that leaves her unloved and unfulfilled. Her father's ghost takes pity on his rather plain looking daughter, and encourages her to revive his lust monster Goddess (played by scream queen Michelle Bauer) to bring Moira to sexual fulfillment. Soon the doctor's plans go awry yet again, as Moira's sexual awakening sends Goddess into a jealous rampage anytime someone lusts after

her mistress.

*Lust For Frankenstein* does have some memorable moments of bondage and bad acting, and some nice scenery, not to mention a bluesy heavy metal soundtrack by Mikel Sagues and Franco himself. On the downside, the film is heavily afflicted by a case of the uglies and can wither the most ardent pornophile if they happen to look at the screen at the wrong time. Nevertheless, Franco's eye for horror archetypes and naked, if not voluptuous, flesh does a decent job of sexing up the mad doctor Frankenstein's creepy castle with a host of wanton lesbians.

-Ina Cent



*The King is back !!*

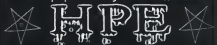
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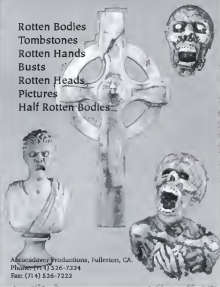
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# More Midnite Movies

## KILLER KLOWNS FROM OUTER SPACE

You're all alone... it's late at night... you're driving down a lonely mountain road without a single soul in sight. What's the most terrifying thing you can imagine materializing from the darkness? For me it would probably be a naked Bea Arthur straddling an old banana seat bicycle with a come-hither look in her eyes, but for the three brothers Chiodo, the answer was unquestionably harlequin. What if you saw a clown starring back at you? How scary would that be?

That tiny kernel of thought blossomed into their first venture into the even scarier world of producing an imaginative low-budget monster movie for the ages. The concept was simple, or simply twisted depending on your perspective: an alien race that just so happen to look like our earth clowns terrorize a sleepy small town community called Crescent Cove.

Since its original release in 1988, *Killer Klowns From Outer Space* has been steadily garnering a cult following in the horror community as well as online, where fan-based websites have made the film more popular now than even the Chiodo's could have



imagined.

"We didn't set out to make a cult classic, campy B-movie, we were making a legitimate horror film," says director Stephen during a conference call with all three Chiodo (pronounced key-oh-do-b) Brothers. "This is not *Killer Tomatoes*, we're not lampooning. That was the fine line we were running, we wanted everybody to play it straight

because the humour comes out of the contrast. If you played it silly it would be stupid. The actors had to play the moment real, which I think makes it sustain after all these years."

Now, thirteen years later, *Killer Klowns* is getting the wide release it deserved all along.

"Finally we have a company who is backing it," says Charles, "whereas the original production company didn't really promote the film properly."

Thanks to MGM's line of Midnite Movies you'll now be able to track down a copy pretty much anywhere, and at a decent price to boot. Adds Stephen, "They're cheap! So buy two and send one to us, I'll autograph it and send it back. Just do a postage paid return with the DVD and we'll sign 'em. That would be cool."

Special features include a hilarious commentary track with all three Chiodos, bloopers, five featurettes, a look at Charles' fantastic original artwork, some very early Chiodo Bros. Productions, and even a couple of nifty Easter eggs you'll have to uncover for yourself. As for the potential for a *Killer Klowns* sequel, The Chiodo's agree the time is now.

"As far as we're concerned, over the last thirteen years there should have been eight," says Edward.

There has even been talk of a television series based on the carnivorous carnival dwellers. But until that day comes, we at *Rue Morgue* say, stock your fridge with seltzer, pile ten of your best friends into a tiny car, hit your local video store and discover what we all suspected was going on behind closed circus doors all along.

Mailing information for the Chiodo Brothers can be found on their website at [www.chiodobros.com](http://www.chiodobros.com)



## DONOVAN'S BRAIN

Doctor Cory's experiments in keeping brains alive long after the body has died backfire when millionaire Donovan's brain begins to exert control over the modest country physician. Soon Cory is walking, dressing, and behaving like the asshole Donovan was in real life. Only perpetually soused Frank and wife Janice (Davis, the future Nancy Reagan) suspect the nefarious plans Donovan has for Cory.

I wish I could recommend *Donovan's Brain*, but in the face of the far superior and very similar *X - The Man With the X-Ray Eyes*, the brain loses out over the eye candy. Sadly, *Donovan* never really gels as a film... the mad doctor's plot to control others through telepathy is dodgy, and while Ayres acquits himself, he doesn't nearly convey the tragedy that Milland does in *X*. With a trailer as this DVD's only extra, *Donovan's Brain* remains a better encyclopedia entry than a purchase.

-Brad Abraham

## DR. GOLDFOOT AND THE BIKINI MACHINE

The nefarious mad scientist Dr. Goldfoot is building bikini-clad sexbots to seduce the world's wealthiest men into signing over their fortunes, and it's up to Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello to stop him. In the



same vein as most '60s beach party movies, this spoof of spy films is a little too silly to really be entertaining. There are some highlights, including the wacky chase scene at the end, clearly an inspiration for *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, and the opening claymation sequence produced by

Art Clokey, creator of *Gumby*. Vincent Price, who could seem creepy reading a phone book, is enjoyable as the title villain, but overall *Dr. Goldfoot* irritates more than it amuses.

-Tom Dragomir

-Pete Sankey

# from MGM Entertainment!



## X - THE MAN WITH THE X-RAY EYES

Proving that "low budget" does not necessarily equal "crappy", 1963's *X - The Man With the X-Ray Eyes* tells the tale of Dr. Xavier (Milland), who learns that his sight-

enhancing serum can also act as x-ray vision. Testing the potion on himself (never a good idea in a low-budget horror film), Xavier finds he can see through walls, clothing and even flesh. But Xavier's curiosity to see further beyond reality teaches him that there are some things men were never meant to see.

*X* is a fine example of what a little moxy and drive can accomplish on limited funds. The film stands in fine contrast to the opulent Poe adaptations Corman produced during the same period, yet deals with many of the same themes—madness and the evil men do in the name of good. Includes the theatrical trailer, Corman commentary and a deleted prologue. An X-cellent addition to any collection.

-Brad Abraham

## THE THING WITH TWO HEADS

When a bigoted transplant surgeon (Ray Milland) learns he's dying, the only way he can save himself is to attach his head onto the body of a black convict ("Rosey" Grier). *The Thing With Two Heads* truly has it all: a rampaging two-headed gorilla (played by FX wizard Rick Baker), some fantastic over-the-top car chases, and delightfully awful special effects. The witty banter between the two heads and an overall playful tone make this movie more entertaining than most big-budget Hollywood movies.

Too bad the DVD didn't come with more than a trailer; a biography on "Rosey" Grier is especially missed (he played football for the New York Giants, and wrestled Sirhan Sirhan to the ground after Robert Kennedy was shot in 1968).

-Pete Sankey



# VINCENT PRICE RULES!

## THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM

Don Medina (Price) is a psychologically twisted man tormented by the traumatic childhood memory of watching his father torture then bury his mother alive. Francis (Kerr) arrives at Medina's seaside castle only to find his sister Elizabeth (and Medina's wife) has died. When it is seemingly revealed that Elizabeth was in fact buried alive,

Medina goes over the edge...and that's when the real fun begins.

The successful follow-up to *House of Usher*, Corman's *Pit and the Pendulum* promises more of the same—chills, scares and another magnificent performance by Vincent Price, complemented by the equally impressive Barbara Steele. The new DVD features a commen-

tary by Corman, whose obvious affection for the film (and his collaboration with Price) provides the viewer with information about all aspects of the production. Also included: the theatrical trailer and a deleted prologue, which is as disturbing as anything this reviewer has seen in some time.

-Brad Abraham

## THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER

The first of the Poe adaptations brought to the screen by Roger Corman, *House of Usher* became one of the top grossing films of 1960 and launched a subsequent series starring Vincent Price. Scripted by Richard Matheson and starring the incomparable Mr. Price, *Usher* is a masterpiece of horror, relying on atmosphere for its many chills.

The DVD is astounding, with the sumptuous Cinemascope image looking better than it ever has. Included is the original theatrical trailer, but the real prize

in this collection is the audio commentary by Roger Corman. The legendary producer/director reveals a wealth of information and his insights make *House of Usher* a must-own for any fan of horror.

-Brad Abraham

## TWICE TOLD TALES

Originally filmed under the title *The Corpse Makers* (why, I have no idea) *Twice Told Tales* is a very classy and stylistic trilogy of terror loosely adapted from the stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne, and one of five horror films from 1963 that starred Vincent Price. Unfortunately, MGM gives us the proverbial middle finger as far as Special Features are concerned, with only a shoddy looking trailer included for the fans. The main menu itself looks very poverty row. It probably doesn't matter much, though, since the real focus of attention here is the late Vincent Price. Not really an effort for the horror buffs, but *TTT*'s reissue looks great in its widescreen 1.66:1 format, and as always, Vincent's starring role is alone worth the (bad pun alert!) Price of admission.

-Aaron Lupton



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# REISSUES

## THE BEST JUST GOT BETTER

### Re-Animator DVD

Starring Jeffrey Combs, Bruce Abbott and Barbara Crampton

Directed by Stuart Gordon

Written by Dennis Paoli, William J. Norris and Stuart Gordon  
Elite Entertainment

Is there a better horror film that combines zombies, syringes filled with glowing green ooze, a mad scientist, nubile co-eds and a fake rubber cat attacking people in a basement? *Re-Animator* is the *Citizen Kane* of talking severed head movies, man! Since its release in 1985, it has become an influential cult classic, brilliantly mixing-and-matching elements from different genres and combining them into a seamless whole. Now re-released on DVD by Elite Entertainment, Stuart Gordon's cult masterpiece looks better than ever.

Very loosely based on a short story by H.P. Lovecraft, *Re-Animator* tells the tale of Herbert West, a maniacal med student obsessed with the idea of bringing the dead back to life. He succeeds, only to find that the dead are tremendously difficult to subdue. The movie rolls along from one wildly imaginative gross-out scene to the next at a frantic pace. This is a viscous black comedy loaded with gore and humour, and one that no horror fan should miss.

The DVD comes with a couple of audio commentary tracks. On one, Gordon provides some insightful details on the pre-production of his film. There are some great anecdotes, but the highlight is easily the director's methodical description of what actually occurs to the body when it dies, which proves to be as creepy as anything in the movie. The commentary is formal and does tend to get a little too technical, especially since this was Gordon's first film, but is highly informative for *Re-Animator* fans.

On the second track, cast members Jeffrey Combs, Robert Sampson, Barbara Crampton and Bruce Abbott, along with producer Brian Yuzna (who would go on to direct the sequel *Bride of Re-Animator*) reminisce about making the picture and laugh at each other's onscreen foibles. This commentary isn't nearly as insightful as Gordon's, but it captures the spirit that must have been at work when the film was being made.

Also included is over twenty minutes of additional footage, including a ridiculous scene where Dr. Hill hypnotizes Dan and



Meg. There is also a deleted scene in which Herb injects himself with his own serum, which better explains his descent into madness. The deleted scenes are interesting to watch, but ultimately it seems most were cut with good reason. The trailers and TV spots included are also bugely entertaining. It's hard to imagine this DVD not becoming part of every horror fan's personal collection. *Re-Animator* has never looked or sounded better; once again Elite Entertainment has done justice to the incredible.

-Pete Sankey

## "AH GOD, IT'S TERRIBLE"

### Fatal Frames: Special Edition DVD

Starring Stella Stefanis, Rick Gianasi and David Warbeck

Directed by Al Festa

Written by Al Festa, Alessandro Monese and Mary Rinaldi

Synapse Films

Al Festa's paean to the Italian giallo genre is a by-the-numbers affair that borrows heavily from the Argento trick-bag. Alex Ritt (Gianasi) is a famous American video director recruited to produce a big budget clip designed to propel Italian singer Stella to international stardom. Not even in Italy for a day, Ritt witnesses a brutal murder. Of course, by the time the polizia show up the body is gone. After a videotape turns up documenting the crime, Ritt is immediately a suspect. His plight is not helped by the fact that his wife died in the same manner.

As more murders pile up, Ritt is caught in an ever-tightening web of guilt, and if you've seen any of the Argento gialli you already know where this film is going. To Festa's credit, the double twist ending does hold a surprise and the ponytail red herring is unique, but the plot is so convoluted and



*Re-Animator*: The best zombie-severed head-mad scientist-beerking-fake rubber cat-horror movie ever made!

full of walk-on characters you'll have a hard time following it. Festa does an admirable job of coping a lot of Argento's visual gags, but the oversaturated colour scheme is beat to death and the seemingly endless slow motion running-through-fog scenes laughable. The murders are brutal and graphic and go a long way towards saving the film from the shitstorm of bad acting that threatens to engulf it.

*Fatal Frames* is at its core a vanity project for producer/"star" Stefanis who, despite her top billing, plays an ancillary character. Exhibiting the sex appeal and thespian ability of bumus, Stefanis drops one stilted line of dialogue after another. Featured in a spectacularly limp sex scene, the camera beautifully captures her back-lit, panty-clad bottom grinding away in ecstasy in the air above Gianasi's groin. The normally affable Warbeck, in his final film appearance, delivers an uncharacteristically shrill performance, embarking on a rampage of scenery chewing in the film's denouement that is nigh embarrassing to witness.

But the most ignominious fate is reserved for Donald Pleasance, rest his soul. Pleasance, well into his 70s, bobbles through his few scenes before ending his career *Plan Nine*-esque, via a stand-in and a painful reference to his most famous film role, replete with the distinctive theme tinkling away in the background. As Pleasance passed away before filming was com-



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FRANK STEVENS

photo by Ward Beull, Los Angeles



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pleted, this is no doubt a heartfelt tribute, but it's painful for all the wrong reasons.

The criticisms of the film stop short at its presentation. This is a Special Edition DVD that lives up to its title. Not only is it a fantastic looking transfer (as it should be, given that this is a recent film), included are deleted scenes, the original theatrical trailer, a Making of, commentary from Festa and Stella, star bios and a heap of bad Euro pop videos.

There is a certain trash charm to *Fatal Frames* that will appeal to the hardcore Eurobuff, but for an introduction to the genre, stick with Argento or Bava. The credits and package prominently tout the film as the Winner of the 1996 Fantafestival Grand Prix Lacio Fulci Award, a distinction which, given Fulci's notorious inaccessibility towards his colleagues, has no doubt resulted in a few sepulchral revolutions by the late maestro.

-The Gore-met

## THE DINGO ATE YOUR MOVIE

**The Howling III - The Marsupials DVD**  
Starring Barry Otto, Imogen Annesley and Max Fairchild  
Written and directed by Philippe Mora  
Elite Entertainment

There's a small pocket of us Morguities in constant competition for the best of the worst titles to land in the office, and believe me when I tell you we get a towering stockpile of these ill-conceived efforts. The recent DVD reissue of *Howling III: The Marsupials* strikes me as just ridiculous enough to warrant entry into this strangely coveted category. Filmed for about a million in '86 outside of Sydney, *The Marsupials* does its best to put an Aussie spin on lycanthrope lore by tracking the emergence of the now extinct Tasmanian tiger (a.k.a. marsupial wolf) into an outbreak cult of werewolves who carry a little extra storage space down under.

When Jerboa, an attractive young wolf-girl, becomes estranged from her hairy



*The Marsupials*: Thrills on par with *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom*.

peers, she manages to land the lead in an Australian horror movie called *Shape Shifters 8*. Amid meddling scientists, a hostile army contingent and likely subpar craft services, she simultaneously manages to bridge werewolf/human relations, fall in love, give birth to a wolf-boy and even win an Oscar for best actress.

However, the only teeth the DVD component has to offer is in its overall visual presentation of the film. An 1.85:1 anamorphic widescreen transfer from what must have been a remarkably well preserved print keeps colour tones lush throughout, and film grain is almost minimized to nil. That said, give credit to Elite for polishing this sundried turd into a beautiful golden brown. The new Dolby digital 5.1 audio track is a nice touch but hardly necessary for a mostly dialogue driven comedy/horror. A still photo gallery and promo trailer make for weak bonus materials, as does the well meaning albeit pretty dry director's commentary by Philippe Mora.

Aside from certain gems like *Redneck Zombies* or *Killer Klowns from Outer Space*, a scant few of these wonderfully wackered-out titles ever truly live up to their fantastic premise on screen. That said, I won't be clamouring to rediscover *Howling IV: The*

*Original Nightmare*; however, in spite of my better judgment, had it been called *Howling IV: The Marsupials II* I'd do my damndest to beat Ol' Man Bowen, Mr. Spurling and Von Lupton to the pouch.

-Tom Dragomir

## BARK AT THE MOON

**An American Werewolf in London DVD**  
Starring David Naughton, Jenny Agutter and Griffin Dunne  
Written and directed by John Landis  
Universal Home Video

Whatever John Landis did and didn't do in his career, he gave the world *An American Werewolf in London*. Chopped liver and a side dish of innards that ain't. *American Werewolf* has easily gone down as one of the most innovative, suspenseful, funny and horrific movies ever made, and that's saying a lot when you take all those ingredients into account. Landis did it the way horror films are supposed to be made, with a lot of atmosphere (check out all that fog over the British barrows), wit (the title says it all), originality (did you read that title?) and gore FX (from Rick Baker, who snagged an

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**American Werewolf:** One of too many forgotten yaf classic scenes.

Academy Award for his work).

Hard to believe it's been twenty years. But it has, and all we can say here at *Rue Morgue* is thank the devil himself that the suits

didn't let this one slip by! (We were seriously concerned.) Unlike many of its less celebrated brethren, *American Werewolf* gets the full DVD treatment, clocking in at over four hours with the extras included. What you get: a solid interview with Baker who discusses the way the masters used to do it with rubber and latex; a personable interview with Landis, audio commentary with actors Naughton and Dunne; storyboards; photo gallery and behind-the-scenes; a making of featurette, production notes, trailers and DVD-ROM features. Ah yes, then there's the one-hour, thirty-seven digitally remastered minutes of prime film stock, presented in widescreen for your viewing pleasure.

Even though I should, by rights, be burned out on this flick because I've seen it so many times, I can't tell you how good it was to finally see *American Werewolf* in all its DVD glory. Landis' direction is flawless and the British setting adds a whiff of Hammer

which had me pining for the good old nights.

Yes, the sequel did suck ass, and no, you won't find anyone here apologizing for it, not that they needed to. After twenty years, *American Werewolf* continues to stand on its own as a top contender for best werewolf film ever made. On a side note, if you happen to own a store and order the DVD direct from Universal, they'll throw in a free bag of Tootsie Rolls. So go ahead, do it for the kids, do it for Halloween. Do it 'cause it's right.

-Emma Anderson

## THANKS FOR THE RIDE, LADY!

### Creepshow 2

Starring Lois Chiles, George Kennedy and Dorothy Lamour

Directed by Michael Gornick  
Written by George A. Romero  
Anchor Bay Entertainment

As part of the Anchor Bay horror reissue juggernaut comes the quintessential '80s horror sequel, *Creepshow 2*. Quintessential, because it was everything its predecessor was, only less. In fact, you might say *Creepshow 2* was *Creepshow* cut in half.

There are only three stories instead of five. The stories are based on ones written by Stephen King, but King himself is not the screenwriter. George Romero writes, but doesn't direct. And Tom Savini serves only as effects supervisor, not the hands-on guy. In synch with this "less is okay" philosophy comes this DVD reissue, another example of taking good ideas and not going anywhere with them.

In fact, the major highlight of this DVD is the film presentation. The anamorphic transfer at 1.85:1 is pristine, with good contrast and few shadows. While the picture is great, the sound is less so - sharp Dolby Surround but otherwise inconsequential.

Unfortunately, Anchor Bay skimps on the extras, a sin in my book of DVD reissue musts. Included is a trailer in Dolby Surround that brings back memories of an era of cheesy, but fun horror flicks. In addition, a three-minute collection of about thirty

behind-the-scenes stills is included, mostly of makeup application procedures. One of the more creative aspects to *Creepshow 2*'s DVD presentation are the sub-menus which are set up like a comic book, with hands that turn pages as you move through screens. This feature ties the film together with its EC horror theme, but like the other extras on the DVD, it's ultimately peripheral.

For what it's worth, *Creepshow 2* has never looked better than it does on this DVD reissue. But as everyone knows, fans are always screaming for something more. What about commentary by George Romero or special effects "supervisor" Savini? At least let us in on the genius behind the immortal refrain "Thanks for the ride lady, thanks for the ride!" Since a film like *Creepshow 2* probably doesn't have many diehard fans to begin with, a DVD reissue does sort of demand something, well, extra.

-Aaron Lupton

More Reissues   
on page 64!

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## SECOND-TIER FULCI

### *The Black Cat* DVD

Starring Patrick Magee, Mimsy Farmer and David Warbeck  
Directed by Lucio Fulci  
Written by Lucio Fulci, Biagio Proietti, Sergio Salvati

### *Manhattan Baby* DVD

Starring Christopher Connelly, Martha Taylor and Cinzia de Ponti  
Directed by Lucio Fulci  
Written by Elisa Livia Briganti and Dardano Sacchetti

Between the years 1979 and 1983 Italian horror director Lucio Fulci made ten feature films. This prolific period is widely regarded as Fulci's golden era and his output during this time has received the greatest critical attention. The latest additions to Anchor Bay's Lucio Fulci Collection include two films made during that period that are generally regarded as lesser in the Fulci canon. Overshadowed by the gore excesses of *Zombi-2*, *City of the Living Dead*, *The Beyond* and *House By the Cemetery*, they occupy awkward and unique niches in the Fulci filmography.

After the success of *City of the Living Dead* (*Passa nella città dei morti viventi*), Fulci made the crime film

*Contraband* (*Luca il contrabbandiere*) before returning to straight horror with *The Black Cat* (*Il gatto nero*). "Freely adapted" from the Edgar Allan Poe story of the same name, the plot ultimately bears little resemblance to the source material. Patrick Magee (*A Clockwork Orange*) lives in a rural English village, a medium who tape-records conversations with the dead in the local cemetery. He also shares a sadistic symbiosis with the malevolent feline of the title. "We are bound together in hatred," he intones. "He wants to kill me." After a series of bizarre deaths, each precipitated by the presence of the prowling cat, Scotland Yard Inspector Gorley (Warbeck) is called in to investigate. Gorley recruits an American tourist (Farmer) to photograph the bodies, and together they search for answers to the strange deaths.

*The Black Cat* is the most playful and

lighthearted film of this era. There are two specific elements that make it memorable: Sergio Salvati's cinematography and David Warbeck's performance. Salvati's kinetic camera provides the cat's visual perspective and follows it through its dark visitations. At times, the scenes are composed to resemble frames of an issue of the glorious EC Comics of the late 1950s. Warbeck, reputedly a long-shot candidate to replace Sean Connery as England's most famous super-spy, gives a dead-on Bond impersonation as the Inspector. From his reckless entrance on a motorcycle to his suave demeanor and supple brow, Warbeck is Bond. He even gets the girl, before Fulci shatters the Bond myth and runs him down!

Taken from the original camera negative, *The Black Cat* suffers from an annoying scratch that appears on the right-hand side of the screen for varying lengths of time. The widescreen aspect ratio restores visual information vital to advancement of the plot, and although damaged, the print is still a wonderfully detailed departure from the murky and cropped Lightning Video release. The supplemental materials include the original theatrical trailer and a Fulci biography.

*Manhattan Baby* came on the heels of the critical and commercial failure of *The New York Ripper* (*Lo squartatore di New York*), and on the cusp of a popular cycle of supernatural thrillers based on mummies, tombs and pharaoh's curses. Christopher Connelly stars as George Hacker, an Egyptologist assailed by an ancient curse after opening a previously undiscovered tomb. Venturing into the bowels of the tomb, he is struck blind by a beam of blue light emitted from an ancient symbol embedded in the wall. At that same moment – and a creepy one at that – his daughter receives a charm in the form of the same symbol by an old Egyptian crone. Back in New York, Hacker recuperates from the incident in the tomb, while his children travel through time, and people around them begin to die mysteriously.

Despite some inspired moments, *Manhattan Baby* is a pedestrian film undermined by script rewrites and *Battlestar Galactica*-like visual effects, as well as a general lack of enthusiasm for the material. The ultra-gore that is Fulci's trademark is sadly absent here. Other than a gratuitous face plant on a bed of spikes recycled from – ironically enough – *The Black Cat*, and a vicious attack by a flock of stuffed birds in the climax (look for



the strings), this film is essentially bloodless. Also recycled are some musical cues from *The Beyond*, even though long-time Fulci collaborator Fabio Frizzi (*Zombie*, *House By the Cemetery*) delivered a solid original score. Gaglielmo Mancori's ponderous cinematography is at times stunning, but the opening scenes in Egypt are more than comfortably reminiscent of the beginning of *The Exorcist*. Neither a good film nor a bad one, *Manhattan Baby* is a technically adept mélange of something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue.

Anchor Bay presents a near pristine print in the original 2.35:1 theatrical aspect ratio, with only a few traces of discernible print damage. As with *The Black Cat*, the widescreen presentation restores crucial visual information lost in the old Lightning Video VHS release. Included as extras are an interview with Italian screenwriter Dard-



The blind shenanigans of *Manhattan Baby*

zno Sacchetti (*Zombie, The Beyond*), the theatrical trailer and talent bios of Fulci and Sacchetti. Fulci completists will embrace this handsome disc, but most fans will just yawn.

**-The Gore-met**

## I DON'T WANNA GO DOWN TO THE BASEMENT

*The House by the Cemetery* DVD

Starring Katherine Maccoll, Paolo Malco and Ania Pieroni

Directed by Lucio Fulci

Written by Dardano Sacchetti

Anchor Bay Entertainment

Anchor Bay's Lucio Fulci Collection continues to steamroll with a reissue of the Italian Maestro's last great grue-fest, twenty years after its initial release. The reissue has been given a beautiful transfer and some respectable special features, but ultimately doesn't seem to go far enough for a film of this stature. Whether or not you like Fulci, the guy's got a rare cult following, and *House by the Cemetery* is one of four reasons why (the others being *Zombie, The Beyond*, and *City of the Living Dead*). Still, if you belong in the Fulci camp, you will want to track down this DVD.

One of the more creative efforts on the reissue is the interactive menus. When you navigate between menus and extras, a first person camera races to different blood-splattered locations inside the titular house. Two digitally transferred trailers are included; both of which are way too gory to have ever been seen by wide audiences. A TV spot is also included, which remains in its raw presentation.

Like Anchor Bay's Dario Argento collection, the DVD features informative talent bios, in this case detailing the careers of Fulci and writer Dardano Sacchetti. The Fulci bio is lengthy and composed primarily of quotes from books and magazine articles. However, since the EC DVD contained footage of an interview with the director from Eurofest 1994, this extra seems to be a notch disappointing. Sacchetti's bio is slightly more informative, and makes for a nice touch since he is a personality who is not given enough coverage despite massive genre contributions. In case you're a neophyte, Sacchetti is the writer behind *Inferno, Demons, Bay of Blood, Zombie, The Beyond*, and many other legendary entries in the canon of Italian horror. At one point the writer remarks that Sacchetti's work on *Bay of Blood* went on to inspire the *Friday the*

*13th* series. Although they don't replace the personal touch of an actual interview, these bios do the job in filling in the historical blanks.

The DVD also includes a short still gallery that primarily features international poster art, another standard bonus for Anchor Bay reissues. There is also an easy to find easter egg - a deleted scene that reportedly has never been seen before. It's a silent but very gory scene (thank God!) that takes place right after Norman Boyle stabs the hat chewing his hand.

*The House by the Cemetery* is essentially a worthwhile reissue, mainly because its anamorphic widescreen presentation at 2.35:1 is so gratifying after a series of absolutely horrible video versions. The colours are solid and pronounced, all the better for viewing Fulci's unrelenting blood-letting. Uncut and remastered, there's more than enough red stuff to go around on this baby. While the extras could have used a documentary or so, Anchor Bay does go the distance in acknowledging the film as a minor historical horrorfact.

**-Aaron Lupton**



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## JEEPERS CREEPERS, WALLY!

**Dracula vs. Frankenstein**  
Starring Lon Chaney Jr., Regina Carrol  
and Forrest J. Ackerman  
Directed by Al Adamson  
Written by William Pugsley and Samuel  
M. Sherman  
Troma Team Video

*Dracula vs. Frankenstein* is one of those campy 1970's monstrosities of an exploitation movie. A fabulous disaster, so wrought with problems from the get-go, that it's only natural Uncle Lloyd and the Troma team would give it the royal treatment for its inaugural DVD release. Originally written (and shot!) as a biker gore flick called *Blood Seekers*, and later *They're Coming to Get You*, Al Adamson and Sam Sherman turned it into a monster bash to capitalize on the early '70s classic monster revival. No less than four trips to the editor later, the vastly re-shot *Dracula vs. Frankenstein* eventually pits two of golden horror's most popular monsters (who, incidentally, never squared off for Universal), mano a mano.

Dr. Durrac (J. Carroll Nash) is the last of the Frankenstein clan, the wheelchair-ridden creepy old curator of a beach-front house of horrors. A visit from Count Dracula, played by Adamson's stockbroker (named Zander Vorkov by Ackerman), convinces the old man to reanimate the Frankenstein corpse, with shocking results. As we've come to expect from Troma reissues, the expanded DVD component bits all the marks and more. The digitally mastered picture looks good and packs a smorgasbord of bonus goodies. Of course, the requisite original trailers are here, along with running radio commentary by Sherman, Adamson's long-time partner and president of Independence International Pictures. You'll also find an alternate ending and some unreleased footage, which includes a lost Ackerman scene and an interesting look at Sherman's original 8mm location footage.



visions of a white-faced figure and strangely drawn to an abandoned, palace-like amusement park. An acknowledged inspiration for both *Night of the Living Dead* and *The Sixth Sense*, *Carnival of Souls* is as much a creepy horror film as it is an example of low-budget artistry.

*Dementia 13* is primarily known for being one of Francis Ford Coppola's first directorial efforts, but it also succeeds as an eerie thriller. Shot in Ireland, it follows a series of grisly axe murders that plague a wealthy family, all of which are somehow related to the death of their youngest daughter years earlier. The film combines an atmospheric set and moody lighting with an approach to storytelling similar to Hitchcock, which gives it a dynamic style and makes it superior to most low-budget thrillers. While the film is flawed, most notably in the wooden acting, it is still competently executed and consistently interesting. Both have already been re-issued in pristine, deluxe DVD editions. In comparison to the sharp transfers on those Special Editions, the sound and picture quality of this Double Feature is barely adequate. Both films appear grainy and scratched, and the audio is muddled. What's worse, there's not so much as a trailer included with either.

*Carnival of Souls* and *Dementia 13* are both good films that are definitely worth a look. However, if you truly want to appreciate these two movies, save your money and get the versions with all the bells and whistles.

-Pete Sankey

Director Herk Harvey in *Carnival of Souls*  
(continued from page 60)

### CLASSICS ON THE CHEAP

#### A KILLER B DVD DOUBLE FEATURE

**Carnival of Souls**  
Starring Candace Hilligoss, Sidney Berger  
and Francis Feist  
Directed by Herk Harvey  
Written by John Clifford

**Dementia 13**  
Starring William Campbell, Luana Anders  
and Bart Patton  
Written and directed by  
Francis Ford Coppola  
Marengo Films

Everyone has a cheapskate friend who would love this DVD. This is the friend who doesn't care if their copy of *The Exorcist* was just recorded off TV, or who doesn't mind if their bootleg copy of *Evil Dead 2* has an occasional picture scramble. *Carnival of Souls* and *Dementia 13* are two incredible films, but this bare-bones Double Feature would only interest fans on a budget.

Harold "Herk" Harvey's *Carnival of Souls* was a rare gem, the first and only feature film by a small group of industrial filmmakers. An effective, deeply unsettling film, it tells the story of a young organist played by Candace Hilligoss, who is the soul survivor of a car wreck. She is haunted by chilling

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Richard Laymon • Clive Barker • Richard Matheson  
Stephen King • Dean Koontz • Ray Bradbury*



So what if Dracula sports a full wanky looking beard and uses a cheesy decoder ring to incite even cheesier FX? And so what if the monsters only clash in the film's final minute? And who really cares that Frankie looks more like a half dissolved Frankenberry marshmallow when we get to watch a half drunk Lon Chaney Jr. stumbling around countless plot holes (nay, chasms) in his final film appearance? The whole thing brings a distinct Rocket Robinhood sensibility to two of horrors most beloved creatures – a result so entirely flawed it can't help but be entirely entertaining.

-Tom Dragomir

THEY WON'T STAY DEAD!



**GROUP HUG OF THE LIVING DEAD**

*Night of the Living Dead: 25th Anniversary Documentary*  
With George Romero, John Russo, Russell Streiner and Karl Hardman  
Written and directed by Thomas Brown  
EI/Suburban Tempe

*Ultimately, I don't know whether to hate John Russo or pity him.*

-Joseph O'Brien, RM#12

I have no idea what relations between George Romero and John Russo have been like since Russo added that lame new footage to *Night of the Living Dead* in 1999 (an act of vandalism on par with exhuming Natalie Wood's corpse and giving it breast implants), but all appears to be sweetness and light in this 1993 documentary. What's impressive is the way that Thomas Brown – apparently just an avid fan with some video gear – has managed to corral Romero, Russo and producer/stars Russell Streiner (Johnny) and Karl Hardman (Harry) for a round table discussion-cum-backslapping session. If that's not enough, he's also snagged appearances from horror gods Wes Craven, Sam Raimi and Tobe Hooper as well as B-mavens Fred Olen Ray and David DeCoteau, all of whom gush (understandably) about the influence of Romero's first feature.

Much of the film is taken up with Romero and friends reminiscing about *NOTLD*'s oft-troubled production, and while most fans have heard these stories before, it's still genuinely inspiring to hear them told firsthand by the film's creators. Inspiration, after all, is probably an even more integral part of *NOTLD*'s legacy than any nightmares it has caused down the years, as the celeb interviews attest. Craven and Hooper both assert that they had originally planned to make self-indulgent arthouse fodder until *NOTLD* convinced them that horror films could actually function as both entertaining and social commentary. Likewise, while it's no secret that Romero's *Living Dead* films were heavily influential on *The Evil Dead*, it's interesting to hear this explained in detail by Raimi himself.

While Romero remains relatively humble about his achievements, Russo, Streiner and Hardman make no bones about the pride they take in *NOTLD* and its historical significance, and that's pretty understandable. In a documentary about virtually any other modern horror film, such self-fellating would get very tiresome very fast. But when the film in question is rivaled in terms of influence only by *The Exorcist* and *Halloween*, a bit of crowing seems entirely appropriate.

-John W. Bowen

**A FLOWER WITHOUT POWER**

*Flowers in the Attic* DVD  
Starring Victoria Tennant, Kristy Swanson, and Louise Fletcher  
Written and Directed by Jeffrey Bloom  
Based on the novel by V. C. Andrews  
Anchor Bay Entertainment

The late V. C. Andrews is likely spinning in her grave as Anchor Bay re-releases the 1987 film version of her most popular novel, *Flowers in the Attic*, on DVD. This clumsy thriller skimps on all of the novel's trashier themes, and as a result whimpers where the book packed a wallop. In fact, other than the

distant association with Andrews, the film has little to recommend it.

Victoria Tennant stars as the mother to unsufferably cute twin tykes and two bright teenagers. When her husband dies suddenly, she is forced to take the children to live with their grandparents, to whom she hasn't spoken to since before the children were born. She hopes to win back her father's love, as well as some of the inheritance, after being cut out of the will for marrying her uncle (yes, that's right). In the meantime, the children are imprisoned in a tiny bedroom by their ridiculously evil grandmother, played by Louise Fletcher, who gives the exact same performance she gave as Nurse Ratchett in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

*Flowers in the Attic* lumbers along like a drunken sailor whose had a couple of bottles smashed off his head, lacking any real direction or motivation. Apparently it would take these seemingly resourceful kids nearly six months of being imprisoned in an attic before they begin to realize that something's not right. Writer/director Jeffrey Bloom uses some terribly shoddy dialogue, as grown adults spot lines like, "someone should have told us that fathers die, even good fathers!" The stiff acting makes it even more unbearable. A pre-*Buffy* Kristy Swanson, as the oldest sibling, seems particularly ember-raded.

The film's transfer is only adequate, with some edge enhancement and solid blacks, but the colour throughout is still very muted. The audio is equally disappointing, with only a mournful track that is as unevenly mixed as the film itself. The only extra that was included was the trailer, which proved to be the most exciting part of the disc. Inexplicably, the insert poster that came with the disc lists Wes Craven as director and co-writer.

Although the book has become a library favourite, *Flowers in the Attic* is a slow, stiff, and stupid movie, and seems destined to be long-forgotten. The only thing shocking about the film is that Anchor Bay even bothered with it.

-Pete Sankey



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## GHOSTIES & CORPSES & DWARVES, OH MY!

### *The Invisible Ghost* 1941

Starring Bela Lugosi, Poly Ann Young and John McGuire  
Directed by Joseph H. Lewis  
Written by Al Martin & Heather Martin

### *The Corpse Vanishes* 1942

Starring Bela Lugosi, Elizabeth Russell and Angelo Rossitto  
Directed by Wallace Fox  
Written by Harvey Gates  
Marengo Films



*The Invisible Ghost*: Even portraits aren't safe from the fiendish Bela Lugosi!

If by some medical twist of fate I live to the age of 70, roughly once every eight months I'd have to watch at least one movie featuring original terror titan Bela Lugosi to be able to rightly claim I've seen them all. Starting somewhere in the middle, I bid you welcome to two of Lugosi's poverty row Monogram Film appearances of the early 1940s, now reanimated by Marengo for DVD consumption. In *The Corpse Vanishes*, Bela stars as Dr. Lorenz, a deranged scientist abetted by a sinister dwarf who kills and kidnaps the bodies of newlydead brides. Notably similar to his portrayal of Dr. Mirkle ten years previous in *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, this time instead of injecting brides with gorilla blood, Lugosi drains their bodily fluids and injects it into his aging shrew of a wife as a magic youth elixir. Shot

on a ha'penny budget in less than twenty days, *The Corpse Vanishes* is a mostly cheap play on his previous *Dracula* popularity. He and the Countess Lorenz (Elizabeth Russell) even sleep in matching coffins, for apparently no other reason than to say, "Bela Lugosi's in our movie and he's sleeping in a casket... get it?"



As an aging aristocrat tortured by the disappearance of his wife, Lugosi's Dr. Kessler paddles a slow boat to crazy-town in *The Invisible Ghost*. A series of baffling murders at Kessler's sprawling manor is wrapped in an intriguing whodunit narrative, which excuses the film's sheer lack of ghosts and/or invisibility. The characters are well presented and strong performances by Lugosi and Clarence Muse as butler Evans

raise *The Invisible Ghost* a cut above the average Monogram horror feature. Unfortunately, the potentially enthralling murder-mystery angle fizzles when Dr. Kessler is revealed as the killer far too early into the film. The DVD release hits absolute zero in the bonus department, with nary a bio or trailer in sight! And the print actually looks a little too good for seminal drive-in schlock, where a little hiss and pop only serves to enhance the murky atmosphere of the movie itself.

Of Lugosi's 108 credited onscreen appearances *The Corpse Vanishes* and *The Invisible Ghost* would probably rank somewhere in the upper bottom half. While Lugosi often brought a talent to his films that usurped the movies' inherent worth, in doing so he injected a dose of artistic integrity capable of transforming bad movies like these into not only watchable, but worthwhile experiences.

-Tom Dragomir

I LOVED IT!  
- ALICE COOPER

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- PETER STEELE  
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#1: The Gore-met says "Happy Halloween" to all his faithful readers!

### 1 Demons (1985)

The premise is simple: a disparate group of people are given free passes to the screening of a violent horror film in a grand Gothic theatre. When events in the theatre begin to mirror those in the film the audience is slowly transformed into a horde of pus-oozing, scalp-ripping, eye-gouging demons! Lamberto Bava's action/horror hybrid remains one of the most purely enjoyable horror films of the '80s, and perhaps of all time. *Demons* features buckets of Sergio Stivaletti gore FX, '80s metal, and Bobby Rhodes as Tony the Pimp, one of horror-dom's most quotable characters. "You act like you was afraid to break them!"

### 2 Daughters Of Darkness (1971)

A 300-year-old lesbian vampire and her servant/lover seduce and read apart a young couple boneymoonning in a Belgian resort town. A languorous pace and dream-like cinematography perfectly complement the film's surreal atmosphere and shocking violence. An excellent example of the erotic vampire sub-genre, this one will cbill your blood while it warms your loins!

### 3 Living Dead Girl

(La morte vivante) (1982)

Two workmen illegally dumping nuclear waste in a seemingly abandoned crypt decide to try their hands at grave robbing as well, inadvertently reanimating the corpse of the beautiful Catherine Valmont. After dispatching the two workmen in an orgy of

blood, Catherine shambles off to her dilapidated estate and reunites with her lesbian lover. It soon becomes apparent that only the fresh blood of the living will sustain Catherine. Can her and Helene seduce enough men to keep her alive? An under-appreciated horror film that is both melancholy and poignant, infused with healthy doses of shocking violence and gore.

### 4 City Of The Walking Dead

(La invasión de los Zombies atómicos) (1980)

A mysterious plane lands at the city airport and is immediately surrounded by police. After a short standoff, the belly of the plane bursts open, unleashing a horde of machete waving atomic zombies! They need blood to survive, so they kill and suck everything in their path to lifeless husks. The zombies rampage through city streets and disco TV shows while the military ponder and dither. This film is so full of dubious gore, oatmeal-faced zombies and risible dialogue that you can't help but love it.

### 5 Cannibal Apocalypse

(Apocalypso domani) (1980)

John Saxton and Italian horror whipping boy John Morghen are Vietnam vets having difficulty readjusting to civilian life: they have been infected by a virus that forces them to eat human flesh! When their insatiable appetites overwhelm them, they find themselves on the lam from the cops and a gang

of bikers. Brain blasting action, beeping helpings of first-rate gore and another stellar turn from Saxon!

### 6 Fury of the Wolfman

(La furia del Hombre Lobo) (1972)

Prof. Waldemar Daninsky (Paul Naschy) kills his unfaithful wife and her lover before dying in a car accident. When an evil female scientist disinters his body, the full moon revives Daninsky as a rampaging werewolf! In a bizarre plot twist, she becomes a werewolf too! Brain bending continuity errors and chainsaw editing plod this one in the toilet of bad filmmaking, but this deranged mess mustn't be missed by Naschy fans.

### 7 Night of the Seagulls

(La noche de las gaviotas) (1975)

A 14th century cult of Satanic, blood drinking Templar Knights are blinded and burned at the stake by a horde of horrified villagers. As the flames engulf them, they vow to return for revenge. Five hundred years later, the withered corpses of the Knights rise from the grave to exact their revenge on the descendants of the vigilante mob. Amando de Ossorio made four films with this same plot, of varying quality. This final installment of the series is a creepy chapter short on dialogue and long on atmosphere, one that remains woefully overlooked. ☹

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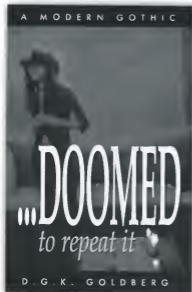
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by Edo van Belkom

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## THE ELOQUENCE OF TOURNEUR REISSUE FROM THE ZONE EXPERIMENTS IN EROTICA



### The Cinema of Nightfall: Jacques Tourneur Chris Fujiwara The Johns Hopkins University Press

As a movie fan, not a cineaste, film theory which distills filmmaking (at its best, a visceral, poignant experience) into a purely intellectual exercise has never appealed to me. Fortunately, *The Cinema of Nightfall*, Chris Fujiwara's analysis of director Jacques Tourneur's oeuvre, combines a fan's enthusiasm with a scholar's rigour.

In his 43 years in film, the French-born Tourneur directed 33 feature-length flicks, from westerns (*Canyon Passage*) to spy dramas (*Berlin Express*) to film noirs (*Out of the Past*). But readers of *Rue Morgue* will be most interested in Fujiwara's critiques of Tourneur's horror classics: *Cat People* (1942), *I Walked With a Zombie* (1943), *The Leopard Man* (1943) and *Night of the Demon* (1957).

The son of director Maurice, Tourneur began his career in the '20s as a Hollywood bit player and script clerk before joining his father as an editor and assistant director on several European films. A return to Hollywood precipitated his entry into feature filmmaking with MGM, while a friendship with



### Richard Matheson's Twilight Zone Scripts, Vol. 1 Stanley Wiaters, Ed. Edge Books

Submitted for your approval one Richard Matheson, writer of horror, science fiction, suspense and fantasy. One of a now legendary group of writers known as the Southern California Sorcerers; the author of such classics as *Hell House*, *I Am Legend* and *The Incredible Shrinking Man*. Richard Matheson is all too familiar with the world of shadow. A world that lies beyond our own. A dimension of sight. A dimension of sound. A dimension of mind. For Matheson is a resident, and a guide to those brave souls who will forever visit *The Twilight Zone*....

This, the first part of a two volume set of Matheson's complete *Twilight Zone* scripts is a more affordable version of the rare and expensive hardcover released by Cemetery Dance a few years back (and worth every penny by the way). The new collection will be a treat for the legions of fans of the classic show, and serves as a good introduction to novice viewers and readers of Matheson.

The eight teleplays presented within will trigger memories in older fans of *TZ*, and are entertaining reads on their own. Screenplays are meant to be dramatized, not read, and Matheson's abilities as a novelist are compli-

producer Val Lewton blossomed at RKO with the making of *Cat People*, *Zombie* and *Leopard Man*. These were stylish, chilling films which favoured suggested scares over overt ones and established Tourneur as a box-office force. *Night of the Demon* (known as *Curse of the Demon* in Britain, where it was produced) was made independently and suffered from meddling producers who undercut Tourneur's subtlety by inserting a rubber monster in the titular role against the director's wishes (see *Classic Cut* - *RM06* for details).

Fujiwara's affection for Tourneur's work is palpable (he calls *Cat People* "a perfect film") but never mawkish. No less a light than Martin Scorsese - himself a vocal Tourneur fan - praises Fujiwara in his foreword for his "thoroughly researched and perceptive treatment." If Tourneur himself remains something of a mystery, it may be because, as his wife Christiane told one interviewer, "[he] never talked about himself, really... He was never impressed by people, and he never wanted to impress them."

Thankfully, Tourneur impressed us - the fans - with a body of work that treated the supernatural with respect and wonder, a fact Fujiwara acknowledges with eloquence and insight.

-Sean Plummer

mented by his ability to write thought-provoking (and creepy) television, the likes of which have been rarely seen since. Famous episodes Nick Of Time (the one with the fortune telling box), The Invaders (the one almost completely devoid of dialogue) and Little Girl Lost (a BIG inspiration for *Poltergeist*) are accompanied by lesser known efforts like Young Man's Fancy and genre vet Stanley Winter does a fine job spurring Matheson's recollections on each story. The second volume will include *Spare of the Moment* and the famous *Nightmare At 20,000 Feet* (see *Classic Cut RMY16*). Hopefully, we can someday expect the same treatment for Charles Beaumont's *TZ* scripts.

-Brad Abraham

## Embraces: Dark Erotica

Paula Guran, Ed.

Venus Or Vixen Press

In her introduction to *Embraces*, a new anthology of dark erotica, editor Paula Guran says, "If you want unsurprising, comfortable 'erotic horror'... put this book down RIGHT NOW... and go find *Fangs for the Manmories XXIV* or some similar tome."

True to her word, there is a distinctive shortage of knife-wielding sex maniacs,

vaginas with teeth and monsters with penises like cruise missiles. Pointing out how unerotico most "erotic horror" tropes actually are, Guran deliberately sought out something different. Consequently, all of the work in *Embraces* is stylish and much of it experimental and most of the monsters here are the ones that lurk in the human id.

Nancy Holder's allegorical opener, *You Give Me Fever* takes the torch song line quite literally. Charlee Jacob's *Teopor* makes one man's obsession with stomach-turning grotesquerie not only believable, but touching. Jay Russell's *First Love* takes mother love beyond the most imaginable extreme. David Schow's *Saturnalia* and Steve Rasic Tem's *Creeps* both explore the limits of desire with fascinating and disturbing results. Joycean excesses are one of the greatest pleasures of Robert Deveraux's hilarious tale of the orgasm fairy, *On The Dangers Of Simultaneity*...

Even though *Embraces* doesn't manage to transcend the oxymoronic dilemma poised by the concept of "erotic horror", envelopes are successfully pushed. This is a surprising, challenging and important anthology and at the very least, it will turn you on to some red hot writers. The book can be ordered online from [www.venusorvixen.com](http://www.venusorvixen.com).

-Dale L. Sproule

## The Black Gondolier and Other Stories

Fritz Leiber

Midnight House

*The Black Gondolier and Other Stories* collects eighteen stories from one of the 20th century's most influential authors of fantastic literature. The dilemma I had with this book is probably a microcosmic variation of the problem with Leiber's writing career in general. The man had far too much range for his own good. Lovers of his *Fafhrd* and the Grey Mouser fantasy classics were likely bemused by science fiction novels like *Gather Darkness* and many of his science fiction fans were probably put off by horror novels like *Conjure Wife*.

Some of the stories in this collection suffer the fate of much science fiction from that period in being too conceptually and stylistically old-fashioned for modern audiences. The *Black Gondolier* presents the concept of sentient, if not downright malicious oil; and stories like *Mr. Bauer And The Atoms* and *The Man Who Made Friends With Electricity* deal with such concepts as sentient electricity.

I was much more impressed by stories like *Lie Still*, *Snow White*, which deals with necrophilia in a tale of erotic horror that seems decades before its time. Likewise, *The Secret Songs* is a stylistically daring and oblique take on drugs and insanity. Other stories like *The Phantom Slayer* are timeless thrillers.

While it's sad that much of Leiber's non-sword-and-sorcery work has faded into something approaching oblivion, it is understandable. When you pick up a book expecting *Sheelha of the Eyeless Face* and *Ningauale the Seven-Eyed Wizard*, it can be disconcerting to find yourself reading: "Aim to plant her in hemp and opium poppy, Son, with henzedrine hushes between the rows" (*The Old Rancher*); or "Yeah, but what legal crop you fixin' to raise, Dad?" (*The Young Cowpoke*). When you pick up *The Black Gondolier and Other Stories*, do it with an open mind and let Leiber take you to places you weren't expecting.

-Dale L. Sproule

## GOTHIQUE

Gothique

Kyle Marffin

The Design Image Group, Inc.

I was given a choice of a few books to review, and the only one I didn't want was Kyle Marffin's *Gothique* because it was a vampire story, and I felt I'd already O.D.'d on my share of those. As it turned out, *Gothique* restored my faith in the great vampire novel.

In the story, Colleen, an all American girl, is thrown into the world of vampires when her roommate, a wannabe vampire goth kid, is murdered during a graveyard rendezvous. The police are unable to explain why his body has been drained dry of blood, and are equally confused when the corpse disappears from the morgue. Vowing to find the killers and avenge his murder, Colleen recruits her boss, his policeman girlfriend, and a war veteran to destroy *Gothique*, a vampires' lair disguised as a goth club. But they all soon find out more than they bargained for when they learn just how cooperative city officials and civilians have been in welcoming the evil new residents.

This hare-hones plot summary doesn't even scratch the surface of the intricate storyline. Suffice it to say that everything about it is hypnotic - the plot, the subplots, the drama, the relationships, the emotions, and the profound understanding of the desires of this underworld.

-Nina Mouzitchka

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pounding heart

labored breathing



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# Dispelling Counts: Two From Canada's Dracula Expert



Vlad Tepes: Portrait of the bloodsucker as a historical figure from *Dracula*.

## Dracula Elizabeth Miller Parkstone Press

No doubt in response to the rising demand for coffee table books on every topic conceivable, Canuck vamp scholar Elizabeth Miller seems determined to bring a certain degree of academic into her books, even those of the coffee table variety. Her *Dracula* is just that; cchock full of wonderful colour pictures and lovely large print, this full-sized tome aims to make the reader a casual expert on the world's most famous vampire: Dracula.

True to form, Miller exposes 20th century misconceptions to the killing light of day, tracing the development of the vampire and the myth of Dracula through the ages. She begins with a history of Vlad Tepes/Dracula

and sorts through the scanty accounts of his six-year rule as voivode in Wallachia. Though it is clear that Vlad took a fancy to impaling his enemies and friends, Miller points out that most of the tales that have come down to us were recorded by the Turks and the Germans – in other words, Vlad's opponents.

Miller moves the discussion to a dissection of vampire folklore and its origins. I found this to be the least interesting chapter in the book, being versed in werewolf mythology myself (apparently, the werewolf and vampire have much in common). However, the following chapters on Bram Stoker's genre defining novel and the Count's present-day incarnations kept my interest to the end. Miller's comprehensive look at Stoker's sources and the interpretations of his book, not to mention the literature and movies that subsequently sprung from it, makes for an eye-opening read.

Though Miller could not avoid all the trappings of the coffee table book (some of the pictures do not directly relate to the subject matter and seem to be little more than wall-paper), her obvious love for and experience with the topic make this an educational glance at the most famous of the famous monsters.

—Mary-Beth Hollyer

## Dracula: Sense & Nonsense Elizabeth Miller Desert Island Books

Elizabeth Miller has come not to prate about Dracula, but to bury him – or at the very least drag him kicking and screaming into the sunlight. *Dracula: Sense & Nonsense* lays to rest close to one hundred popular misconceptions about the infamous, fictitious vampire. It is the Memorial University of Newfoundland professor's third academic text on the monster and his myths.

Bad blood? As fellow vampire scholar Clive Leatherdale explains in his introduc-

tion, Dracula lore became mired in purposeful misdirection in the 1970s, little to none of which has ever been redressed. (Surprisingly, it turns out that Anne Rice is not to blame.) Nor did a century of "faithful" cinematic adaptations help matters – Coppola culpa, Coppola maxima culpa.

Easily the most notorious of these for-the-most-part groundless speculations is the notion that *Dracula* author Bram Stoker based his character on the historical figure

Vlad "The Impaler" Tepes. "Accepted as axiomatic, circumstantial at best," states Miller – quite generously, considering her case against that little point.

Other well-known claims that Miller stakes include the scaming omnipresence of vampire bats in Europe (an ambitious commute from South America – how disappointed they must have been not to have appeared in Stoker's

novel) and the Count's aversion to daylight (*Dracula* offers no fewer than seven instances of its protagonist working 9-to-5).

Miller divides her exposé into six specific sections, including the sources, the author, the novel itself, and an entire chapter concerning the facts in the case of M. Impaler. Examination of dubious claims in point/counterpoint fashion, coupled with the scholar's exclamatory enthusiasm for the process of debunking – "Balderdash!" "Triple trash!" "Rubbish!" – makes for an entertaining, episodic read.

The last word on *Dracula*? Miller herself points out that the first word (after the novel) remains the yet-unpublished collection of Stoker's own Working Notes And Papers For *Dracula*, available for public viewing at the Rosenbach Museum & Library in Philadelphia. That said, *Dracula: Sense & Nonsense* is a coffin full of bones worth picking and dirt worth turning; an undeniably enlightening read for Transylvanian tourists and children of the night alike.

—Gary Butler



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# TERROR HAS BIG EYES

鬼眼 RECENTLY RECEIVED ANIME

BY DONALD SIMMONS



## VAMPIRE PRINCESS MIYU AnimEigo 60-minutes/Dual Language DVD

Himiko, a psychic investigator, has her work cut out for her in these first two episodes of a four episode series.

First, she has to consult on the case of a little girl in a coma, while a rash

of vampire-like killings occur around her. The disappearance of several high school students is made more sinister by the grotesque wooden dolls which are left in their place. Also involved is Miyu, a myste-

rious laughing girl with the powers of a vampire but none of the weaknesses, and her silent, cloaked companion.

*Vampire Princess Miyu* is a modern classic of physiological horror, relying not on gory visuals but on mood and atmosphere to create tension and suspense. The detailed backgrounds and character designs, especially the intricate facial expressions, add a lot to the overall effect. This is a world where shadows lie everywhere, and ordinary people are helpless against what lies within them.

Miyu herself is a completely amoral creature, seemingly existing outside our con-

ventional bounds of good and evil. She hunts demons to return them to hell, but preys on "beautiful people", taking their blood and leaving them as peaceful zombies, with no cares or worries, while laughingly avoiding all of Himiko's attempts to cast her as the villain of the piece.

Unfortunately, the quality of this DVD reissue doesn't match that of the series. The picture and subtitles are blurry in several places, an image gallery is the only additional feature, and the fact that all four episodes weren't squeezed into one disc really feels like price gouging. A wonderful series, but a second-rate production effort. I expected more from AnimEigo.

## BLOOD - THE LAST VAMPIRE Manga Entertainment - 45 minutes/English Language

*Blood* is Japan's first fully digitally animated film, the latest major project of the studio and director of *Ghost in the Shell*, and one of the most anticipated (and hyped) titles of the year. And it delivers (well, okay, mostly).

Set in Japan in 1966, the movie follows Saya, a young (maybe) girl who is working

for the Americans as a demon hunter. After a fatal case of mistaken identity on a subway (which gets quickly covered up), she is sent to a school on an American Air Force Base, with bombing missions to North Vietnam constantly coming and going. The movie then unfolds as an anime version of *From Dusk Till Dawn*, as a hy-

terical school nurse and the always poised Saya have to go one on one with demons masquerading as students during the military base Halloween party.

Visually, this movie is stunning. Though

most of the backgrounds are completely computer rendered, the characters were created using traditional cel animation, and then digitally transferred virtually (no pun intended) into a seamless finish. The fight scenes are quick, brutal, and entirely realistic. And the movie even logically switches between subtitled dialogue (when two Japanese speakers are present) to English (when any American is around). Most of the dialogue was actually written in English (an anime first), with Youko Kodoh (*Snow Falling on Cedars*) playing the role of Saya.

The movie's greatest problem is length, clocking in at forty-five minutes, it's way too short and leaves too many questions unanswered. *Blood* was conceived as a true multimedia project, including a novel, the movie, and a PlayStation 2 game, all released in Japan within months of each other, each a different part of Saya's story. While the movie will have a limited theatrical run in North America in the fall, we may be out of luck on the other two parts for some time. Still, it's a must-see.



## ANGEL SANCTUARY US Manga Corp Three 25-minute episodes/English Language

*Angel Sanctuary* is a strange, strange title. Its goal seems to be to portray as many screwed up, weird, and downright perverted relationships in as wholesome a way as possible, set against feuding angels and the possible end of the world.

Here's the story: Sakuya has a problem. He's hopelessly in love with his sister Sara, to the point where he has to check their birth records to be sure they're related (yep they are, too bad!). His mother hates him, and he's only got one friend, his classmate Kira. He's also the reincarnation of the female angel Alexiel, who once led a rebellion against Heaven and lost. God is now asleep, and several factions are trying to reawaken her for their own ends, including a child demon and her own twin brother Roshiel, both of whom she was apparently involved with. So Sakuya's got angels and demons after him, finds that Kira's a lot

more than he seems, and learns that Sara just might feel the same way about him! Oh yeah, and if Alexiel happens to return, she'll trigger the apocalypse.

The war between heaven and hell played out on Earth is something we've seen before (most recently in *X: The Movie*), but *Angel Sanctuary* does a better job of it, keeping the number of characters manageable and developing them a whole lot better because of it. Sure, some of the explanations are still force-fed, but we know who everyone is and what they want (usually someone they're related to!).

The biggest problem with *Angel Sanctuary* is that it ends on a cliffhanger which may never be resolved. But if you want to see angels bleed, forbidden love, Tokyo Tower blown up yet again and the admission that God can be "surprisingly goofy", you'll want to check this out.



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# BLOOD in FOUR COLOURS

Comics  
by Gary Butler



**S**ome sixty years after one man took the mantle of a bat, and some forty years after another got the powers of a spider, the latter's creator is taking the former for a glide. Not surprisingly, Stan Lee's take on Batman is equal parts caped crusade and crawled wall. And depending on what you're looking for, it works.

What Lee leaves Batman: his parental blood-debt, his belief in justice in an unfair world, his physical prowess and his iconography (right down to the costume, the cowl of which is now a fully realized bat's head). What Lee borrows from Spidey: his misunderstood teen syndrome, his innate goodness, his harnessing of science to enhance his abilities and his wrestling phase (from Spidey's first appearance, true believers!).

Lee also firmly places this story in the golden age of comics despite giving it a contemporary setting by invoking said era's over-fondness for alliteration; Batman's real name is Wayne Williams, his nemesis, Handz Horgam. Artist Joe Kubert does a fantastic job of synthesizing the looks of Bob Kane's '40s Batman and Steve Ditko's '60s Spidey – or maybe that's Joe's style in the first place?

Regardless, *Stan Lee's Batman* stays true to the central, defining characteristics and situations that launched two of comics' greatest legends, merging them almost seamlessly, and throwing in a wholly unexpected resolution to boot. If Bruce Wayne had seen a spider on his windowsill or if

Peter Parker had been bitten by a bat, this very likely would have been the result, then or now. In other words: Stan Lee Forever.

Fans of David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, Patrick McGooohan's *The Prisoner* and William Shatner's *The Devil's Rain* probably pounced on Gary Spencer Millidge's *Strangehaven* when it launched in 1998, but anyone who likes a good "small town with plenty of secrets" kind of story should jump in immediately. The first twelve issues are available in two, separate trade paperbacks (*Arcadia* and *Brotherhood*), and issue #13 is only just hitting the stands now.

Writer/artist Millidge juggles a vast collective of some dozen bizarre, character-driven plots without ever missing a throw – but always adding plenty of catbats. And while the main story is far from resolved, *Strangehaven* has already been optioned by Hollywood. For fans of sorcery, bloodlust, gossip and taking the wrong turn at Albuquerque.

Whether you're a Dragon aficionado or merely a savage, you have to agree that few action writers can cram in even half the two-fisted plot points that Erik Larsen manages to toss in to an average issue of *Savage Dragon*. In the current, altered reality continuum – "Savage New World" – faces and places may be the same, but little else can be taken for granted. (When *Dragon* judged, juried and executed Darklord in issue #75, he failed to consider



## IN THIS ISSUE...

JUST IMAGINE: STAN LEE'S BATMAN

by Lee and Kubert

DC

STRANGEHAVEN

by Millidge

ARCADIA/PROGRESS PRESS

SAVAGE DRAGON #86

by Larsen

IMAGE

ELEKTRA #1

by Bendis and Austin

MARVEL/MARVEL KNIGHTS

INSANE CLOWN POSSE: THE PENDULUM #9

by McCann and Beck

CHAOS!

the ramifications of killing a time traveller, albeit an evil one.) This story arc is Larsen's tribute to '70s and '80s Marvel comics – fittingly, the era when Marvel was known as "the house of ideas". Current covers are specific John Byrne homages (check out Larsen's new, stylized signature).

Issue #86 finds a desperately-in-need-of-support *Dragon* reunited with Ann Stevens, a.k.a. Mighty Man. Problems solved? Not likely: altered Ann doesn't know that she's also a man(!). *Dragon* helps Stevens discover her powers moments before a Martian bent on

murder attacks her, and it's up to MM to save the day. The only hitch is that the world's mightiest man chokes – after all, (s)he's a nurse. Just when you thought you'd read it all: a Superman archetype gets performance anxiety. Keep devouring those sugar-coated cereals, Erik (not to mention those classic issues of *Fantastic Four*).

"This blade I am holding, I have died at the end of it. I tell you this because I



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want you to know that every time I use this blade – every time I slice into a man's flesh with it – I know exactly how it feels." No one gets to the point better than Marvel's toughest soldier of fortune,

Elektra. In the debut to her inevitable – frankly, overdue – Marvel Knights series, the Greek typhoon who died and was resurrected and died and lived to tell about it finds her father's murderer, holds him at saipoint and recounts her life story. And that's just the first ten pages.

So why was Brian "dead-on dialogue" Bendis assigned the task of scripting Marvel's woman of few words? Meet S.H.I.E.L.D. agent Stanley, and delight in watching him talk the talk as he tries to fox the fox. And meet Nick Fury again for the first time; Bendis only gives the man five panels, but he's never been more paternally patriotic, not to mention plausible. Artist Chuck Austen does a dynamite job of bringing two cat-and-mouse, sidewalk café dia-

logue scenes to life; given the fact that ten-on-one ninja fights are a staple of Elektra stories, it's too bad that his sense of active action needs work. (Yes, a sai could be thrown right in to the barrel of an Uzi, but putting an airborne sai in one panel and a plugged gun in the next one leaves more than just a little to the imagination.)

They might be insane clowns, but this ain't no psycho circus. The question is: does CHAOS!'s take on horror-rock stars in comics kick ass, or does it merely KISS it? The answer lies somewhere between, though this maniservs does score points for originality in a couple of areas. Every individual, polybagged copy comes with a CD featuring new ICP music; by concluding issue #12, hardcore fans will own the duo's complete new album before it's released by the record company. Plus, as comic characters, neither the insane clowns nor their labelmates, Twizid, are afraid to present themselves in an unflattering light. To wit: the two duos are actually enemies, beating



**ICP or Twizid?** Como book violence the way KISS used to do it.

the living shit out of each other just about every second issue without giving a rat's ass if innocent people get caught in the crossfire. Yes, there's a plot that involves a demon wickeder than, I damn, Ozzy Osbourne in his fat, hairspray years, but let's face it: you're buying this story for the ICP dialogue, like, "Damn. I dropped faster than a new Slipknot album!"



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**SACRED FLESH**  
Band of Pain  
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A very black, dark and twisted spirit emanates from this CD, truly a work of striking originality and genuine audio horror. The occasion, the latest effort by Nigel Wingrove, a director who holds the dubious honour of having been the last man in Britain to be successfully prosecuted for "blasphemy" (after his last film, *Visions of Ecstasy*). His newest, called *Sacred Flesh*, chronicles the internal torments of a medieval nun as she battles sexual desire, her vows of chastity and the fear of eternal damnation. Aided by keyboards and stifled vocals, writer/composer Steve Pitts creates an inner chaos of throbbing ambient noise and bruised soundscapes. *Sacred Flesh* will undoubtedly have to go through a few more obstacles before it reaches Western shores (already the film was almost banned in Britain), but we'll keep you posted. In the meantime, the soundtrack is distilled ambient, as sinister as it is smothering and unsettling in a most beautiful way. Available from [www.cold-spring.co.uk](http://www.cold-spring.co.uk) -RG 3.5.11



**ICKY FLIX**  
The Residents  
EAST SIDE DIGITAL

Those of you with a taste for the darkly bizarre will be able to take it up a notch with the release of this companion soundtrack to *The Residents'* recent audiovisual feature *Icky Flix* (see

RMK20). Fans will remember that the DVD contained newer (read, significantly warped) renditions of classic tunes, and basically this album puts them together for easy consumption. What's to say? If you thought *The Third Reich 'N' Roll*, *Songs For Scaring Larvae* or *The Gingerbread Man* already sounded demented, you haven't heard a damn thing! The irony may be that *The Residents* succeed in reinventing previously unlistenable tunes to the point of listenability. I wonder if that was intentional. -RG 3.5.11



**AMAZING SOUNDS OF SHOCK THEATRE**  
The Lawn Jockeys  
Big Beef Records

Who is Dr. Creep, anyway? If you happen to have resided in Southeastern Ohio between 1972 and 1985, there probably isn't any doubt in your mind. Sporting a garb that recalls an undead Mennonite and a bellowing laugh that sounds like Santa don't his best Halloween, the bad doctor became a cult figure of late night TV with a show called *Shock Theatre*. For whatever reasons, the affable host has taken it upon himself to release an album of retro-dance vibes interspersed with audio bits from the horror movies he featured for over a decade. For the project, he hired a rag-tag team of jammies who call themselves *The Lawn Jockeys* and the rest is really obscure history. Numbers like *Dr. Funkencreeper*, *ZZ Shock*, *Ebony*, *Ivory* & *Jade* and *Funkinggunn* ought to tell you a lot. What's to say? If you live for reruns and late night cable TV, *The Amazing Sounds of Shock Theatre* may actually make musical sense to you. As for us, we're pretty dumbfounded and, for the first time ever, are at a loss on how to actually rate this album. Enter at your own risk -GC 3



**BRIDE JUST DIED**  
All Hallow's Eve  
NDN Records

We here at the Audio Drome live and die for horror punk. So you can imagine our excitement when a UK punk album comes in featuring production from *The Damned's* Rat Scabies and song titles like *London After Midnight*, *Rosemary's Baby*, and *Jack's Theme*. *Bride Just Died* avoids the inevitable comparison to the *Muffs* due to a lack of song along anthem-choruses, but unfortunately for us, this isn't the only thing they lack. While the horror vibe seems in place and ready to go, the band doesn't really go anywhere with their sound. Standard three-chord punk that comes off more lazy than minimalist and horned vocals that don't sound oena, evil, or even angry. The songs here are roughly the same quick burst of moderated aggression over and over again, lacking the quirky pop most often associated with this sort of thing, thanks to bands like *Razor East* and *Forbidden Dimension*. There are occasional creepy moments here and there, especially on *Deadbeat*, which features Scabies on keyboards. We sincerely appreciate this band's dedication to our beloved genre, so for what it's worth, you may want to keep your eyes on future projects just in case. -AL 3.5.11



**SHADOW REICHENSTEIN**  
Shadow Reichenstein  
(INDEPENDENT)

If you're reading this review, chances are you'll want to take a peek at our piece on psychobilly rock. In fact, we're not entirely sure why this band didn't make it onto the bill, this is really pure graywave rock and roll with songs that run the gamut from zombies and vampires to madmen and terrors in Texas. *Shadow Reichenstein* know how to put out a Halloween spread, they offer haunted hot rod rock and roll on *Black Car*, spooky beach music on *Cemetery Surf*, a loopy B-movie vibe on *Zombie Dance Tance* and a vampire version of *The Animals'* classic *House Of The Rising Sun* (which they rename *Fear Of The Rising Sun*). The ghoulishly set might peg *Shelley*

*Reichenstein* as siding with the blood beach vibe of *Karlofformo* (i.e. *The Ghastly Ones*) rather than the demented psychobilly of *New Jersey* (i.e. *Psycho Charger*). In other words less punk and more camp. Don't let the indie label scare you off though, this debut is a nicely produced undead musical homage to late night creepshows and haunted house thrillers. Around here, we call this the soundtrack to our After-lives. Available from [www.shadowreichenstein.com](http://www.shadowreichenstein.com) -GC 3.5.11



**SEX GANG CHILDREN**  
The Dark Archives Vol. 1  
Hollows Vol.

This album landed in our office long after its release in October 2000, but hey, no better time than *RM's* Halloween issue to review one of the Batcave's marquee ghoulish bands, the darkly original *Sex Gang Children*. Copping the bleakness of *Sauze* and the *Banshees*, the style of glam, the sounds of punk, and a graywave aesthetic all their own, *SGC* became and remain one of the most confusing and inaccessible names in death rock. The aptly named *Dark Archives* is a two disc set, the first containing the band's demo recordings, the second being a 'best of' collection with bits like *Into The Abyss* and *Beasts*, as well as other favourites like *Cannibal Girl* and *Draconian Dream*. For those already acquainted, this CD is a nice addition since you get to hear the old semi-classics with the cowbells still intact, but neither be forewarned, *Sex Gang Children's* name remains a walk-up secret for a reason. High pitched vocals, a doomy, protruding bass and completely off the wall songwriting has made their legacy a little too heavy for some and downright annoying to others. As always, we're big on plugging stuff from the fringes, but do so with caution. -AL 3.5.11



**ROZZ WILLIAMS**  
Live in Berlin  
Hollows Hill

I've got no problem calling *Rozz Williams* an artist, even though I loathe to use such terms when describing pop

There's an old scene bubblin' with fresh ingredients and everywhere the kids are dressing up like the undead. A new film casts its gaze on a dark new wave of horror rock and roll...



by Gregorius Chant



Somehow, somewhere, the white country sounds of Elvis and Johnny Cash ran afoul of the living dead as they burst from late nite drive-in screens across the country. In a way it was inevitable; lurking behind the puppy love ballads of the fifties was a date with corruption, and it came in a wave of

B-movie horror and punk ethos. The result was psychobilly, sometimes called gothabilly, and what it is is what it is: the timeless mantra of rock and roll, the ancient allure of the grave, together at last in a black wedding of hair gel and Halloween makeup.

Although it may sound oddly archaic, psychobilly is really just now coming into its own with a funeral procession's worth of pale-faced practitioners the likes of Cult of Psychic Fetus, Psycho Charger, Demented Are Go, The Brimstones, The Spectres, The Hangmen, Los Gatos Locos, The Nekromantix and too many others to mention. What they have in common is a religious devotion to the gospel of liquor and sex, early rock and roll and classic gore and horror films.

The scene is the focus of a



new documentary called *American Rumble* by New York filmmakers Pamela Theodotou and Kris Wetherholt. Chronicling the Halloween 2000 premiere of the First New York Big Psychobilly Rumble which attracted over 22 bands and 800 fans from around the world, *American Rumble* captures one of the weirdest evolutionary leaps in the history of rock and roll.

Though the film doesn't concern itself with history, it's worth noting that gothabilly had its first real incarnation in the garage music of The Cramps, an Ohio-bred foursome which came together in the mid-seventies. With songs like Human Fly, Goo Goo Muck and Don't Eat Stuff Off The Sidewalk, The Cramps corroded the puppy love of fifties radio tunes and the sunny vigour of surf music with the decadence of punk and the black glitter of sadomasochistic sex and B-horror.

As late as 1983, The Cramps were quot-

**Ghoul Rock:** (from top) *American Rumble* hosts Reverend Doom and Mistress Persephone welcome you to the dark world of psychobilly and (bottom) New York staple Psycho Charger.



**Hillbilly Horror: More madness from Las Gatas Locas**

ing horror host Ghoulardi on their album *Stay Sick* and songs like *The Creature From The Black Leather Lagoon* were advancing the cause that rock and roll music was still sexy, dark and dangerous. In doing so, The Cramps brought together the prime ingredients of psychobilly: the purity of early rock and roll, the decadent spirit of punk and the devotion to the counterculture art of Russ Meyer and Herschell Gordon Lewis.



Though their legacy is felt in *American Rumble's* cast of macabre miscreants, modern psychobilly has a couple of extra pistons in its engine and a wilder punk vibe. Hosted by Cult of Psychic Fetus' Reverend Doom and sultry vamp personality Mistress Persephone, *American Rumble* is a slice of the putrid pie as seen from the inside. Though the film largely comes across as a mishmash of drunken remarks and fuzzy sounding song clips, it nevertheless captures the defiant soul of psychobilly rock and roll.

At its heart are bands like Batmobile, The Photon Torpedoes and Tim Polecat &



The Jet Black Machine, which draw fire from a big gun guitar, three piston drums and a standup bass, the preferred getup of many of these undead outlaws. Inevitably, points of reference include Bill Hilly and the Comets, Screamin' Jay, spaghetti westerns, classic monsters, invasion flicks and porn – not to mention the “fuck you” rally cry of punk rock.

Gothabilly, of course, has spread farther and wider than the New York Big Psychobilly Rumble. The southern US scene – Deadbolt, The Ghastly Ones, Ghoultown, Dead Elvi and The Legendary Invisible Men – offer up more theatrics and less punk while mixing their rockabilly with heavier doses of surf music. That said, *American Rumble* leaves little doubt that horror has found a new avenue of expression in the shocking sounds of psychobilly.



Whatever mayhem hard rock bands like Slipknot continue to muster, these kids have alighted on the one sacred truth about rock and roll:

It's all about the devil. Amen. ■

musicians, whether or not they have entire books of paintings under their belt. Yes, Williams was the godfather of death rock, an original punk musician, and one of the diving forces behind US goth music, but with so much dark creativity stemming from one individual, it seems almost unjust to label him as this or that. More importantly, however, is the fact that Williams seems a rare case in which his presence alone was his music's primary asset. Such a quality finds its evaluation on this live album, recorded in October of 1993, and covering material from a variety of Williams' different musical projects, including goth staple Shadow Project and the poisonous, if less morbid Dæucus Karria. If you're the sort who is skeptical of the prospect of goth in the raw, at least check out this album for a sampling of Williams' uncanny charisma, which had him dubbed both an angel and a demon, as well as the reincarnation of E.A. Poe. Live in Berlin showcases a more rock-oriented Ruzz Williams, something which serves him well outside the dank confines of the studio. The world will never see another Ruzz Williams performance, but given last year's *From Chthonic Death to Daath* artwork and now this album, it would appear that a promise is being fulfilled to keep the man's death-obsessed legacy alive. If the effort continues, maybe we'll finally hear the end of the Alice Cooper vs. Marilyn Manson argument. A worthy addition to your death rock archive. **-AL, 8.8/12**



### MINISTRY Greatest Hits WARNER BROS.

Even people who don't like Ministry would have a hard time denying that the band was an innovator in bringing the feel of our beloved genre into the language of modern alternative rock (for lack of a better term). So at the very least, an album like *Greatest Hits* (which chronicles thirteen tracks from Ministry's Warner Bros. period circa 1987 to the present) is a welcome entry to their legacy. Here's the rub: I happen to have liked Stanley Kubrick and Steven Spielberg's *A.I.* but I thought Ministry's cameo was kinda cheesy, especially having those androids getting killed Roman-to-theons style while the band played on. That tune – called *What About Us?* – is the obvious impetus behind this release and, following on the heels of *Tapas of Wrath*, must mean that someone somewhere is looking for a psychode. Still, like I said, Ministry is one of the greats. No only did they sing about physical brain, they made it sound like it and gave

it a good beat. Includes a live version of *So What, Reload!* and, as the twisted centerpiece, *Jesus Built My Hotrod* starring Gibby Haynes. **-GC, 8.8/8.8**



### PETER MURPHY Alive - Just for Love METROPOLIS

Not only does it turn out that someone goth stivalist Peter Murphy actually does have a soul, but he also does his best to tear it from his rib cage and bare it to the entire audience of LA's El Rey Theatre on *Alive - Just for Love*. One complete “warts and all” set recorded in late November 2000 accompanied by Porno For Pyros guitarist Peter DiStefano and virtuoso violinist Hugh Marsh, *Alive* is a strange and introspective take on Murphy's old solo material. An ultra-stripped down approach to classical instrumentation enforces Murphy's trademark below is front and center, even kicking things off with an Accapella version of *Cool Cool Breeze*. Throughout side one Murphy bares his inner looser lizard, crooning trademark dark matter with a sanctity of passion that might have been washed over by production elements in the studio versions. Fans of Bauhaus will be particularly interested to check out the four encore tracks on disc two which winds down with an onstage marriage proposal and a somber take on *Love Me Tender*. It seems FrankienMurphy was just looking for love all along. **-TD, 8.8/8.8**



### ANDRACULOID Observations In Human Error DSBP

An eerie, diabolical vibe opens the gates on this concept-like album from one John Thomas, who here goes under the pseudonym Andraculoid. Featuring the dark comic art of Steph Dumas (see [resinlove.com](http://resinlove.com)), *Andraculoid's* debut album is an experiment in industrial noise terror (think *Suicide Commando* and *Noise*) seared by demonic vocals and a blitzing of beats. Although Mr.

More Audio Drama  
on page 96!



# SCREAM, BABY SCREAM!

## CLASSIC ITALIAN SOUNDTRACKS FROM DRG



### THE HORROR FILMS COLLECTION Various

As title as it may seem, probably all the known music for Italian horror films can be whittled down to Goblin and Ennio Morricone. Of course, that's nowhere near the truth, as this compilation makes clear. Granted, most of you have probably never even heard of films like *Il trono di fuoco* (*The Throne of Fire*) or *La notte dei diavoli* (*Night of the Devils*) or *7 Note in nero* (*Seven Notes in Black*), not to mention the names of the soundtrack composers. In truth, most of the titles on *The Horror Films Collection* are decidedly second-tier fright fare from overseas with the exception of Argento's *Profondo rosso* (*Deep Red*) and maybe *Mano nuda* (*Seven Notes in Black*), but not necessarily used. The disc is worth the rarity for Argento fans: Marco Werba also pays tribute to Italy's master of the macabre with a creepy opener of original music aptly titled *Dario's Theme*. We won't be to you, many of the selections are mined in their time (1960s and '70s) and place (Italy), but if the thought of inhabiting your very own European horror movie has resonance with you, this disc is the way to do it. For fans of rare Eurohorror all the way. -GC R.R.S.



A rare European lobby poster for Dario Argento's *Cat O' Nine Tails*.



### THE HORROR FILMS COLLECTION Vol. Two Various

Volume two of DRG's *Horror Movie Collection* moves into the late seventies to the early nineties, and the broadening of musical horizons is noticeable. The disc starts off on familiar territory, slightly more upbeat cues for *An Open Tomb*. An Empty Coffin, Lady Frankenstein, The Vampire Strangler, Seven Shewels of Yellow Silk and Seven Murders For Scotland Yard—all of which take heavy influence from Ennio Morricone (circa *Ones Upon a Time in the West*). That said, it's interesting to see how composers took Morricone's structures and manipulated them to suit their own nightmare ends. Two selections from *Zombi 2* signal a turning point for the disc, more into the areas of progressive synthesizer music that had me remembering those old Tangerine Dream records. With *The New York Ripper*, composer Francesco De Mier takes us into a jazzy prog rock number that could only work in the film (sorry guys!), but the second cue uses strings to add suspense. More synths in *Conquest* and prog rock for *You'll Die At Midnight* before a Lucio Fulco Suite which covers music from the late maestro's last three films, namely, *Demon*, *A Calce in the Brave* and *The Door to Science*. Eerie, wistful and percussive, these selections are easily the crowning jewels of the compilation. Volume Two ends off with two cues from 1991's *Hobgoblin* (*Hobble and Hoblarrior*) which brings the ceremony to a close with a ghoulish bang. A fine slice of macabre music and a great way to expand your horizons beyond Morricone and Goblin. -GC R.R.S.1/2



### GOthic DRAMAS Ennio Morricone

The man behind the music for Dario Argento's *Stendhal Syndrome* and John Carpenter's *The Thing* apparently had over twenty westerns under his belt by 1969. Once the seventies kicked into gear, however, the golden age of the cowboys came to a close and Morricone was left to cut his teeth into an ever-widening array of film genres: gangster films, romance and, of course, horror. Following his early work with Argento, Morricone landed a 1977 television series called *Drammi gotici* (*Gothic Drama*) which featured episodes loosely based on the works of H.P. Lovecraft and Niccolò Gogol, among others. This compilation brings in the highlights from the show; musical selections which are among the composer's most chilling. Of note is *La strada della follia*, which opens up with a children's chor accompanied by harp counterpointed by a subtle hint of a threat—just enough to get under your skin. For *Dario del un pazzo*, Morricone samples manic laughter, tormented weeping and pining screams in an eleven-and-a-half montage of deep-seated lunacy. A few of the other selections veer from the path, but overall, *Gothic Dramas* conjures places sinister, weird and desolate. A fine testament to Morricone's impeccable musical reputation. -GC R.R.S.



### THE THRILLER COLLECTION Ennio Morricone

Two discs, thirty four selections, this is a celebration of the Italian soundtrack King's foray into suspense and horror covering the period of 1969 - 1974. The album aims to run the gamut of Morricone's lesser known outings, such as 1971's *Senza apparenze* (*Without Apparent Motive*), 1972's *Il diavolo nel cervello* (*The Devil in the Brain*), 1977's *Il mostro* (*The Monster*) and 1978's *Hoceat 2000* (*The Crossed*), among others. Surprisingly, there's a dearth of music from Morricone's Argento period, except for the jazzy *Cat O' Nine Tails* (with cues for the *Night Walk* sequence and an alternate version of the *Final Pursuit*). True to Morricone's genius, the music is subtle and initerable, wistful in parts and full of the great favour of the Italian westerns and dramas, and with, of course, lots of anxiety and suspense. Although *The Thriller Collection* cuts a broad swath through parts of Morricone's talent, his genius comes out intact. A worthwhile—and minutely listenable—collector's item and a fantastic primer for anyone working in scoring horror pictures. -GC R.R.S.1/2





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**FICTIONAL**  
**Fictitious [+]**  
**METROPOLIS RECORDS**

Fictional is the brainchild of Germi Thomas, the same mind that gave you *Ravenous* and *Funker Vogt* (see *Audio Drama RMW18*). Apparently, Thomas formed Fictional specifically as a hybrid between the two bands and - guess what? - he hits the mark bang on. Those of you with a taste for keyboard heavy club music with a fetish/tech allure will want this album bad, even if you already have it (Fictitious [+]) a tendentially a re-release of Fictional's debut with new artwork and a couple of bonus tracks). Though the inclusion of Thomas on vocals significantly reduced the angst

factor we got on *Funker Vogt*, Fictional has got a dark melancholia at its heart, evident especially on tunes like *Hungry*. On *Hellwosen*, *Nightmare* and *Dream Of God* with their sharp contrast of downbeat lyrics and upbeat music Fictitious is already a club classic and there's not much more to be said at this point, other than that the re-release will anticipate a second album later this year or early the next. -GC 3.5



**DAS ICH**  
**Re Laborat**  
**METROPOLIS RECORDS**

Hailed as one of the most important German electro/industrial acts around, *Das Ich* add significant darkness to an already dark sub-genre created by *Kraftwerk* and elaborated by *Enstürzende Neubauteil* and *Die Knupp*. Composed of vocalist Stefan Ackermann and keyboardist Bruno Kraum, *Das Ich* adds a cybersid capsule of apocalyptic antipathy into a cyberpunk club sound of harsh noise loops and biome-

chanical vocals. The results are impressive, making this retrospective album a fine introduction and/or celebration of the band's growing cult status in the European underground. Like-minded peers such as *Funker Vogt*, *Wumpscout* and *VNV Nation*, among others, take turns among some fifteen tracks from the band's career, always adding their own twists to an already twisted vision. I missed seeing *Rammstein* in the credits but, overall, *Re\_Laborat* is a great primer of electronic and modern industrial elements in dark European music. -GC 3.5



**HAUJOPP**  
**Polarity**  
**METROPOLIS RECORDS**

Generally known for remix work with bands like *Wumpscout* and *Front Line Assembly*, *Haujobb's* back from a two-year hiatus with thirteen new electro-based gothic dance-escapes. Aptly named, *Polarity* winds up into digital beat work, down to solemn cry interludes and repeats the formula for the next 52 minutes. *Subsonic*, the only real standout, leans on some of the more industrial elements that fans of their early work will remember, and the mix plays neatly off the softer breakdown elements. Unfortunately there's not much to separate the rest. Vocals are suitably down-out, but the actual lyrics seem like a string of monosyllabic words plucked randomly from *Rogel's German to English dictionary*. A forgettable face within the crowd of dark electronic music, *Polarity* pulls closer to negative than positive for the most part. -TD 3.5



**DIE FORM**  
**Die Puppe**  
**Some Experiences With Shock**  
**METROPOLIS RECORDS**

Unquestionably an acquired taste within the land of industrial datwawe, *Die Form* resists our efforts to pinpoint exactly what they are about and something tells me that's the way they like it. Often grating, usually slickish and sometimes fractured in the most beautiful ways, Germany's *Phlips Fichtel* and *Elaine P. Spittler* electro-synthetic art à la nobody else all over the conventions of pretty much every established machine based music form out there. Their more recent attention to overall presentation somehow manages to blend the band's notorious sadomasochistic imagery with an appropriately opposed electronic cross between the ethereal versus the chaotic. And somehow it only seems natural to work backwards towards *Metropolis's* two most recent, yet earliest *Die Form* releases. *Die Puppe* is the first official recording, originally put out in a very limited vinyl release. This first tortured step in the musical evolution of *Die Form* shows a surprising amount of energy actually devoted to song structure, albeit minimalist in nature. Elements of loneliness and automation are still thrust forth in spite of obviously primitive equipment but it's still a daunting task to listen from start to finish. *Some Experiences With Shock* is a more intriguing step backward, divided into an analogue half titled *Survival* & *Determination* and a more disturbingly progressive piece of digital work titled *Laborators* & *Immolation*. The analogue end careers between base industrial and pre-techno German organy worthy of a galo flick. On the digital side, *Survival Of A Severely Burned Child*, while not a helluva song title, plays out a quick and painful sound story without words or what you could even call music. It's about as horrifying as "music" can possibly get and for that, *Die Form* should rightly remain as one of the most horrific industrial-based artists tomorrow, today or yesterday. -TD

*Die Puppe* - 3.5/12  
*Some Experiences With Shock* - 3.5



**FOETUS**  
**Flow**  
**THIRSTY EAR**

I've always wondered what in hell happened to *J.G. Thewell*. At very least you come to expect a new release of some sort once every year or so, either under the *Foetus* moniker or some other thrilly veiled pseudonym. So when *Flow* finally gushed into the Drama, I made absolute sure I was the one to sink my *Draco* claws into it. After no less than fifteen spins (with *Foetus* sometimes it takes a

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little longer to really sink in). I think I've got it figured out. The first track is a decent enough opening for a Foetus disc, a sprawling mix of styles and genres, leaning slightly more toward industrial than the better Thewell material out there which fouts classification. Cirrhosis Of The Heart, with its bossa-nova rumba, is the typical Foetus deviation, nearly destroying itself with radio friendly sweep-tones and less clever lyric content. However, Grace Of God redeems things and then some, with classic Thewell vocalization, humbled lyrics and catchy rhythmic arrangement. Suspect aims to become part of the best horror soundtrack of our age, and Someone Who Cares is without doubt the best cut, comparable to the better end of Nail Or Hole. -TD A A A A



### KRISIUN Ageless Venomous CENTURY MEDIA

The brothers of the apocalypse return with a new album boasting more self-production, a detail that the bend feels will lend to a more personal sound. Funny, since Ageless Venomous sounds 100 percent identical in every aspect to last year's *Conquerors of Armageddon*. This Brazilian death three-piece's name translates from Latin to "Seas of Abomination," and their latest blasphemous outing has them praising the serpent on a semi-concept album based around the biblical symbol of evil — big surprise. Unfortunately, the album does not feature as many H.P. Lovecraft themes as the band did in the past, a somewhat common subject for death metal (the band does in fact claim inspiration from Lovecraft and Aleister Crowley). Brutal, grinding, groovy death metal growing the soundtrack to the bifurcal end of a hateful human race. Any more questions? -AL A A A

produced aggro-metal sound borrowing heavier elements of White Zombie and Rammstein that rightly melds the absolute precision of programming with the force of raw human emotion. Thrash guitar riffs, metal hooks, throat bending vocal pops, keyed FX, power chords and churning drum loops bring a violent soundscape to five new and four mixed tracks. I Am The Gas to Burn and The Wer Of Mends might be the best dark industrial to come along since Ministry's *Psalm 69*. Perhaps the only miscue here is the inclusion of a lyric sheet. From *Quest For Nothing*: "Have a laugh have a smoke try a joint choke! Just giggling laughter! My teary earswax drops into your mouth for years uncounted." But I guess it's not always about what you sing, but how you sing it, and Testify do it with their guts hanging out their nuts. Be afraid. -TD A A A A 1/2



### INTEGRITY

Closure

VICTORY RECORDS

Integrity is a peculiarity in the hardcore world. Constantly heralded as the Slayer of hardcore in terms of their impact and influence on the genre, the band's following is really not within the hardcore community at all. In fact, with each successive album, listeners are left to ask, "what the hell is Integrity supposed to be?" Originally half doom metal, half metal-core, these guys made a transformation to Ministry's punk rock offspring. At all times, however, Integrity has skipped the majority of the scene's politics in favour of a dark and brooding vision of the world, very often entering the domain of metal. Check out tracks like *Bloodlet*, *Angela Delenore*, and *Le Mirac*. Sound like your average hardcore act? With dozens we have a mixed bag of rind beats, including sombre ambient, tenting noise-core, dark brooding rock, and of course, evil metal core. What's interesting here is the strong Danzig ambience. The album cover is basically identical to the first Danzig album. *Angela Delenore* features the trademark devil-bliss, and the album includes a cover of *The Misfit's Hybrid Moments* which, unfortunately, they butcher all to hell. *Closure* is still worth acquiring, mainly for the band's experimental tracks. *Mins*, *The Martyr's Inade*, and *Le Mirac*, are all intriguing and missable slabs of dark noise and fine samples of what most heavy music misses. Of course, even after listening to *Closure*, we still don't know what the hell Integrity is supposed to be. -AL A A A A 1/2



### TESTIFY Crack the Mind VAN RICHTER RECORDS

From Essen Germany, Testify's fourth album *Crack the Mind* is a remix (at least inkered with) by Die Krupps, Die Werzou and Plastic Noise Experience. A highly

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**DRY KILL LOGIC**  
Darker Side of Nonsense  
ROADRUNNER RECORDS

Normally, I don't expect much from bands that look like this [braids, goatees, strategically pierced faces], but I was seriously enticed by the very sick and disturbing ampule artwork that decorates the Darker Side of Nonsense. It looked like an artistic interpretation of Terry Gilliam drawing inspiration from a particularly twisted nightmare. Unfortunately for us however, Dry Kill Logic's music is not nearly as inspired as the band's artwork, and sounds just like what you'd expect. Scream-driven hardcore crap with melodic passages dedicated to teen angst, anger and aggression. This is one of those bands that will no doubt be advertised as "delaying easy classification," and "pushing musical boundaries," so we'll let the cat out of the bag. Sounds like: Korn/Slipknot. File Under: New metal. Nice try guys, but you ain't fooling anybody. -AL 8.8



**ICED EARTH**  
Horror Show  
CENTURY MEDIA

American power metalers Iced Earth have a history of delving into the dark stuff, usually through concept pieces, a tactic probably used most prominently in this particular musical niche. Just take a glance at the band's history. *The Night of the Stormdrifter* was a concept album based around a man's pact with evil forces of nature and his eventual fate in hell, *Burnt Offerings* contained a 16-minute musical take on Dante's inferno, while *The Dark Saga* was an entire album based around the band's interpretation of Todd McFarlane's *Spawn*. So it is not at all out of character for Iced Earth to now release an album in which (almost) every song is centered on some famous horror villain, from the Wolf Man and Dracula to the Mummy. Unfortunately Iced Earth are and will always be a power metal band, a style of music that ages as well as homogenized milk. Fans may say *Horror Show* is Iced Earth's

darkest material to date, but we're still forced to contend with high-pitched caw-wailing, nerdy guitar solos and songs that are five minutes too long. Ultimately the music is about as innovative as their horror themes are modern, so approach with caution. -AL 8.8



**SEPULCHRAL FEAST - A TRIBUTE TO SEPULTURA**  
Various  
CENTURY MEDIA

Easily one of the most influential metal bands of the 1990s, *Sepultura* benefits

twice from the same tributes, as Century Media gives this album (originally released by Black Sun in 1998) another go around. Fans will remember that, at one time, Sepultura was renowned for bringing death from the jungle. Satan, black magic, undead warriors and tribal chants were wrapped up in some of the most brutally violent music of the time. This album seems more concerned with those early days and allows the Scandinavians to try their hand at Latin American evil, the result being a host of new songs that can be comfortably filed under "cheesy but good." *Sepulchral Feast* is another one of those tribute albums where the bands don't stray from the tribute, but here it actually ends up being the reason the album works. Bands that we normally do our best to ignore (Goosefish, Guardian) are actually quite listenable for sticking to the bloody roots. All in all an effective, if unnecessary, tribute to the original purveyors of jungle rot. -AL 8.8



**CRADLE OF FILTH**  
Bitter Suites to Succubi  
ANTRA CADAVER

It's official, Cradle of Filth is the world's biggest black metal band, a fact that has led to much resentment from the band's corpse-painted contemporaries. While the idea seems strange that such a group — whose thematic obsessions include blood-soaked lesbian riffs — could be mainstream, there are certain aspects to the band that definitely separate them from their black metal brethren. Singer Dani Filth's prose is surprisingly elegant, as he rasps and shrieks about moonlit graveyards, misty forests, and vampire temptresses. At the same time, the use of gothic keyboards and female operatic vocals add to that Hammer film charm. Perhaps most refreshing is the absence of a bitter-tasting right-wing agenda being pushed down our throats. Even the title of this latest CD seems to betray the band's more light-hearted approach to life and death. Regardless, the UK blasphemers are about to make the big leap to Sony, the first such step for their genre, but before Cradle of Filth begins their trek into unknown territory, they offer the fans a self-released disc, with the fans in mind. *Bitter Suites to Succubi* offers three new versions of old classics, a Sisters of Mercy cover, and six slices of original sin. The re-recordings (Principle Of Evil Made Flesh, Summer Dying Fast, and The Black Goddess Rises) are basically identical to the original tracks, and are recommended only for those who worship the band with candles and incense. The Sisters of Mercy track is an excellent idea, not only because Cradle of Filth has been so instrumental in reviving black metal to embrace its obvious gothic leanings. The original material on *Bitter Suites* has been touted as a return to pure black metal, but don't worry, we didn't buy into it either. Sure, there are not as many keyboards, but Dani's banshee vocals and the group's dark romanticic qualities are omnipresent, making it only a slight musical left turn. Check out *Suicide And Other Comforts* for a perfect example of COF's sweeping sense of style and ability to mix bitter aggression with haunting beauty. For further proof check out this CD's multimedia on the Cradle of Fear horror film, as well as an upcoming Cradle of Filth DVD featuring the twisted *Circus Of Horrors*. -AL 8.8 8.1/2



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**MIND RIPPER - THE VAN RICHTER REMIXES**

Various  
VAN RICHTER

If the skull staring at you on the front cover of this compilation isn't clue enough, this album showcases the darker sides of industrial music. Much of the material is danceable, but overall the music presents a fairly heavy guitar load/electro with the emphasis on angst and aggression. That doesn't stop things from getting dim, however, with most of the artists here bordering on the gothic and apocalyptic. Plastic Noise Experience represents solidly dark analog beats with a really creepy voice-over, while Fair Sex prattle dreams, gothic overtones which call to mind a Black Runner aesthetic. But the highlight for readers of this magazine will no doubt be Toronto's own Death And Honor Inc., back from the rusty industrial graveyard with another dosage of dismal future apocalyptic hell noise. Again the empha-

sis here is more on raging anger than genuine fear, but Van Richter has effectively sewn up the heretofore ripped underbelly of the electronica genre. -AL 8.8/12



**...AND OCEANS  
Allotropic/Metamorphic -  
Genesis of Dimorphism  
(A.M.G.O.D.)  
CENTURY MEDIA**

Now there's a title and a half! And what's with the songs? Intelligence is Sexy. TBA in A Silver Box. For a band clearly written into the black metal book... And Oceans are on a different page altogether. The drag is that their obvious attempt at being "eccentric" makes them come off as the Rush of black metal, what with the futuristic aesthetic and hokey keyboards. And although the band never really comes across as horrific as the majority of their dark metal brethren, we couldn't ignore the comparisons drawn between their music and horror/dark sci-fi movies like Event Horizon, Alien,

**TWO FROM CRYPTOPSY!**

**CRYPTOPSY  
Blasphemy Made Flesh  
None So Vile  
CENTURY MEDIA**

Much has been said of the musical extremes pushed by Morbid's Cryptopsy and the band's expansion into progressive new school hardcore. It seems you can't read about the Dileger Escape Plan, Convergence or Coalesce without running into Cryptopsy at some point. What is never discussed, however, is the band's lyrics and the changes they've gone through with the introduction of a new lead singer, a self-professed "huge horror buff". But before him, Cryptopsy was ruled by the sick, genuinely disturbing diatribe of lead singer Worm. Although his stage name might suggest otherwise, Worm was probably more intelligent than most would realize, drawing from his degree in psychology and English Lit. to get into the mind of serial murderers and deviants and trying to fathom why they do the ghastly things they do.

Both *Blasphemy Made Flesh* and *None So Vile* offer equal amounts of off the wall musical extremes, with *Vile* coming out a notch ahead due to improvements in production. By the same token, *Blasphemy's* rawer sound is complemented by slightly more perverse lyrics, Delestenza's description of a young girl falling to her death being a constantly disturbing moment. But like any fan of the band knows, picking favourites is impossible. Each album (there are four in total) has been a new step in musical perplexity. Century Media has re-released these first two albums with not much else. What is new is pretty insignificant, so you may not want to run out and buy these again if you already own them. But even if you do, check those lyrics again, you may have missed something the first time around. Certainly not for the squeamish, but if you're reading this review, we're sure you're not. -AL  
*Blasphemy Made Flesh* - 8.8.8.8  
*None So Vile* - 8.8.8.8



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Blade Runner and even some graver, Satanic fare. We suspect their anarchic and often goofy disposition will alienate most fans of the genre, but AM.G.O.D. adds some refreshing possibilities to the shrieking vocals, blasting beats, and creepy lyrics for which the black metal sub-genre is so well known -AL 3.8/1.2



**ENTHRONED**  
Armoured Bestial Hell  
BLACKENED

I can't deny it, I've got a big soft spot in my heart for black metal. There's just something about the campy corpse paint, the shrieking vocals and the "A for effort" devotion to heresy that does it for me. What I really don't like about the scene, though, is when bands lose touch with their cinematic roots and get into un-humorous topics like war and extermination. Enthroned follow the black bible guidelines pretty closely here, with the lead screamer going on about the blood of the Virgin Mary and such things, but the album art, title and songs like

Humanicide 666 seem to aspire to topics beyond theological horror. That's all decent and good by the usual black metal standards, but if you look too deep, Enthroned may leave you with a much more bitter taste in your mouth than you intently bargained for -AL 3.8



**JUNGLE ROT**  
Dead and Buried  
OLYMPIC

Jungle Rot play simplistic, old school death metal. Their approach to the genre is primitive, brain dead, and brutally effective, like a horde of semi-sentient zombies on autopilot nipping a small town to shreds. Likewise the lyrics are juvenile and unduly simplified with lines like "We kill, we maim, destroy all the snap of a finger! No fear, no pain, turn Earth to a burning cinder." The whole ordeal reads like a Sargent Rock comic book, due in large part to the band's war theme (jungle rot is the foot-slogging disease soldiers get from stand-

ing in water-logged trenches), silly ultra-violence, and thick, mindless riffs. With too many extreme metal bands taking themselves way too seriously, Jungle Rot stand as a refreshing throwback to the genre's original message: kill, maim, destroy -AL 3.8/3.1/2



**DAEONIA**  
Crescendo  
CANDELIGHT

Naming themselves after "a dark and mysterious land out of an ancient forgotten myth," Daeonia is pretty much textbook gothic rock, and not really the metal band which they are being advertised as. Hailing from the Netherlands, these guys demonstrate their European heritage by limiting instrumentation to guitars, drums, and keyboards, as opposed to the tendency to merge Goth with electronics. The band draws influence from such sources as Tolkien, Hurley, Sisters of Mercy, and The Mission U.K., which translates well into songs of

personal grief and all around melancholy. But if you're like me, you've become a little sick of this "I shed tears in the graveyard"-style gothic rock. Whatever happened to the pure fun of fusing horror and pop music? Daeonia aren't a terrible band or anything, but there really isn't a lot of genuine emotion that comes across on "personae" songs like Biter Sweet and The Ghosts of Christmas Past. Sorry goth kids, but for all their best intentions, Daeonia aren't your next Perfect Circle -AL 3.8



**DEFILED**  
Ugliness Revealed  
Necropolis

Like the majority of death metal's undead crop, Defiled play brutal, vile, ominous, and sickening music. The meaty, disjointed riffs are like rotting flesh coming off the bone, and the vocals call to mind AC/DC's Bon Scott choking on a throatful of puke. All of this is very odd, though, since these death heads from Tokyo (of all places) say that horror

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Combining the extremes of goregrind and death metal, **EXHUMED** deliver blazing, bloodsoaked brutality forged in fire and formed in flame. Now available: Limited edition saw shaped CD with bonus track!

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**RELAPSE** **REPRODUCTION**

movies are too frightening to watch, and real death too gruesome to write about. Coupled with their belief that Satanic bands are really just a bunch of kids trying to pass people off (Sney that), you're probably wondering what attracted these guys to the genre in the first place. Cover art by Wes Benscoter (who's done artwork for Slayer, Killa, Nile and others) would seem to indicate something seriously sinister at work behind the sounds, but there's not much leech to be found on tracks like *Less For A Lie* or *Uncovered Plots*. Defiled may seem brutal, but they don't have what it takes to push the envelope enough to really get your attention. -AL 8.8.8.8



**REQUIEM OF REVULSION  
- A TRIBUTE TO CARCASS**  
Various  
**Necropolis Records**  
Ever wonder what in God's name

spawned all those gore grind bands with lyrics that sound like they're straight out of a medical textbook? The answer rests in the blood-soaked legacy of UK's Carcass, whose lyrics really were taken from medical textbooks, courtesy of frontman/medical student Jeff Walker, who penned such over-the-top 1980s as *Crepitating Bowel Erosion*, *Hepatic Tissue Fermentation*, and *Empathological Necrobrom*. The fact that Carcass was an vegetarian is probably not a coincidence, but it makes for interesting trivia. It's probably safe to say that the outfit took death metal to artistic, musical and lyrical extremes that have yet to be matched, and *Requiem of Revulsion*

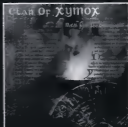
leads those accomplishments by showcasing the bands who took up the gore grind cause. Unfortunately, the entire album gets lost in a convoluted predicament of chaotic grind blasts and lyrical theories that could only make sense in college funeral studies programs. If Carcass can hear this from that big morgue in the sky, I'm sure they're smiling. -AL 8.8.8.8/12



**CLAN OF XYMOX**

**NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND**

Merging haunting and atmospheric synth structures with a variety of dark rhythms, *Notes from the Underground* is a melting pot of the Clan of Xymox's past, present and future. Sure to mesmerize and inspire any fan of gothic, darkness, or art-rock music.



**FRONTLINE ASSEMBLY  
EPITAPH**

Bill Leeb (Exorcism) and Chris Peterson get back to their roots and replace them with Front Line Assembly. This latest comic attack is possibly their best album to date featuring budding artists, trancy synth lines, pulsing beats, and solid melodies. The first pressing of *Epitaph* will be a limited edition digi-pac with a bonus track. *Epitaph's* outrageous artwork for the new hours of industrial music will raze, am, and contain your mind with there is nothing left but silence. Available in a limited edition digi-pac which includes a bonus track!



**PETER MURPHY  
ALIVEJUSTFORLOVE**

As a member of the early art rock pioneers known as Bauhaus, Peter Murphy has impacted the world with his deep sensual moaning and heart-torn lyrics. After the break-up of Bauhaus, Peter Murphy began a solo career legacy, selling out shows and wowing crowds all over the globe. Now Metropolis Records is giving a taste of his live shows to people who have never witnessed this powerful vocalist, and a lifetime of memories for those that have, with *Alive Just For Love* in the fully unmastered cut from the II Ray show in Los Angeles on November 28th during the Peter Murphy Just For Love Tour 2008, featuring Peter Dinklage on guitar. The entire live acoustic disc is brilliantly recorded, crisp and clear, with thick rich vocals, and elegant treatments. The tracks flow smoothly and peacefully beginning to end. All the Peter Murphy favorites are included such as "Indigo Eyes," "I'll Fall With Your Tears," "A Strange Kind of Love," and "Get It On Pt. 2" *Alive Just For Love* also features a bonus disc, containing the entire live acoustic set with former Bauhaus member David J from the December 1st show in Los Angeles. This phenomenal disc features three versions of the Bauhaus songs "This Killing Machine" "86 Me Easy World," and "Hope." Peter Murphy *Alive Just For Love* is an incredible album perfect for those quiet nights alone or for a romantic interlude with someone special.



Released & Marketed by Metropolis Records - for further info: [www.metropolis-records.com](http://www.metropolis-records.com)



**Frank says:  
"I like Roadkill."**

[www.rue-morgue.com](http://www.rue-morgue.com)

**Visit Often.**





GAMES by Marco Pecota

RULES: Carnivore or Great, Occasional: A-OK, Vegan Sucks



## Buy It!

### Diablo II Expansion Set - Lord of Destruction

Blizzard Entertainment  
PC Game - [www.blizzard.com](http://www.blizzard.com)

What is the best endorsement that a reviewer can give a game? That he bought it with his own money? That, gentle reader, is in fact the case. I couldn't wait for a review copy of *Diablo II Expansion Set* to land in our offices, so I went out and secured myself a copy and I can tell you there are no regrets. Close on the heels of the original *Diablo II* release (see RM#18), the set expands the existing universe of dark sword and sorcery. The fact that *Diablo II: Lord of Destruction* has become the fastest selling expansion set ever, shattering sales records worldwide with over one million copies sold, ought to tell you something.

Here's what you get: two new character classes (Druid and Assassin), an entire new Act (the mysterious Barbarian Highlands with a slew of new monsters and an expansion into the *Diablo* mythos), item swapping capabilities, a significantly improved hireable NPC interface, lots of additions to the items list and interactive environments which allow you to carve your own path through Act V by destroying breakable wall sections, barricades and siege towers. Think of this update as MORE, more fun to play, more action and gore and more of that eerie soundtrack. This is definitely a PC game staple, to know *Diablo* is to love *Diablo*.

PLAYABILITY: Carnivore  
GRAPHICS: Carnivore  
SHIVERS: Carnivore



## The Mystery Continues

Mystery Rummy Case No 3: Jekyll & Hyde  
U.S. Game Systems  
Card Game - [www.usgamesinc.com](http://www.usgamesinc.com)

From the creators of *Mystery Rummy Cases No. 1 and 2* (*Jack the Ripper* and *Murders in the Rue Morgue* - see RM#10), comes the third installment in this rare line of horror-themed parlour card games: *Jekyll & Hyde*.

The game is basically a version of rummy that incorporates characters and situations from the famous story. Players score points by making combinations that correspond to the states of the doctor's split personality. You win when you "become" either Dr. Jekyll or Mr. Hyde.

A lot of people won't see much in a game like this, but I loved it. The cards are artful and gash and go a long way to adding a sinister dimension to a straight-forward card game. Also, the elements from the story have been worked into the game in such a way as to actually generate some mystery. Whether you can actually get behind a game like this in the age of PCs and PlayStations or whether you are a collector of rare horrors, *Jekyll & Hyde* won't disappoint.

PLAYABILITY: Omnivore GRAPHICS: Carnivore SHIVERS: Omnivore



## Back to the Past

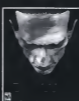
### Necronomicon - The Gateway to Beyond Dracula - The Last Sanctuary

Dreamcatcher  
PC Game  
[www.dreamcatchergames.com](http://www.dreamcatchergames.com)

Inspired by the writings of H.P. Lovecraft, *Necronomicon* places your character beyond science and into a dark and eerie realm of fantastic shadows. Your friend's life is at stake, and it's up to you to solve puzzles and discover a mysterious apparatus that will save him from cosmic doom. A myriad of unearthly sounds and effects accentuate the dark trappings to be found in *Necronomicon*, making it an eerie experience if you dim the lights and lose yourself in the nightmare.

Unfortunately, the game has been designed to work on really low-end PCs, and therefore comes off as pretty dated fare, even though it was released earlier this year. Case in point: although *Necronomicon* is a first person RPG, your character doesn't actually walk across the screen. Instead, you point and click with your mouse to jump to selected areas. This happenstance makes it impossible for you to get sucked into the horror of the thing.

All this also holds true for the second release by Dreamcatcher, called *Dracula - The Last Sanctuary*. To its credit, *Dracula* does have some really great "cinemagraphics" that kick off the game (I'm a sucker - pun intended - for high quality graphics in movie form, and this game delivered with a wicked intro). Once that's through though, we're back to pointing and jumping.



In the game, you play Jonathan Harker and you must rid Mina of the vampire's curse. The hunt takes the player through the story's staples: turn-of-the-century London and Transylvania, an insane asylum, Dracula's castle and an underground prison littered with the bones of forgotten men. Although the visuals do have a creepy charm to them, I can't say I recommend either game, unless you happen to be particularly adept at or interested in puzzle-solving.

PLAYABILITY: Omnivore GRAPHICS: Vegan SHIVERS: Carnivore



# NEEDFUL THINGS

*what you want, what you got, what you want, what you got*

## ZOMBIE SOLDIER DEATH ACTION FIGURE

US \$69.95 to \$89.95

Jason, Michael, Freddy blah, blah blah. At some point, having a gory toy is a good thing only if the toy is gory. So what's in a name, after all? This one is named Gregory and he's a Zombie Soldier – good enough! The little bugger comes in fully posable 1:6 scale body, authentic uniform and accessories and, best of all, realistic battle damage, the likes which has his ribcage exposed and his brains spilling out the side of his head. A truer patriot you won't likely find in any history book!

Whether your subscription to *Soldier of Fortune* magazine leaves you wanting more blood for your buck or whether you are simply a lover of all things zombie, Gregory and his mates are the definite fit for the bill. So go ahead, show off the battle scars you wished you had with this army of soldiers not-quite blown to smithereens. Bedecked with bloodied clothing, torn limbs, hanging jaws and empty eye-sockets, these Death Action figures will follow your every command, providing you don't stray from the time-honoured "A1 ease!"

Available from **Village Comics** at 212-777-2770.



## WACKY WOBBLERS

US \$12.99

Ever since we saw those Count Chocula wobblers, we were hooked. Call us crazy – er, whacky – but these Whacky Wobblers are the desktop application of choice for those who discuss about these types of things. Fitted with overproportioned heads that wobble at every movement, these critters endear themselves by manically nodding to your every casual remark.

Done up in the style of characters from dimestore comics of a bygone era, the Wacky Wobblers are not only good quality, they're unique. Perfect for your dashboard. Choose from El Diablo, Demonique, Johnny Fang and Ed Roth's Rat Fink. Go ahead, your hot rod's dying to be haunted. Available from [www.funko.com](http://www.funko.com)

## GHOSTS OF MARS COLLECTIBLE TRADING CARDS

US \$5 per pack

We know what you're thinking: why would anyone collect trading cards based on a movie that has a villain named Big Daddy Mars who looks suspiciously like Marilyn Manson right down to the piercings? You overlook the obvious: these Ghosts of Mars trading cards will probably outdo the film on every level. At any rate, the creators have certainly done their bit to ensure that the cards stick around way past the whole week the film is in theatres.

The cards are easily the best I've seen; they're glossy and colourful, have pertinent character information on the reverse along with a helpful Fact You Did Not Know (such as that the aforementioned Big Daddy has over two-hundred piercings). Best of all though, is that these decks don't have the dubious one out of ten cards that are fuzzy and definitely not worth collecting.

Even viewers who are not going to get much farther than Ice Cube in the credits will want to check out a limited edition John Carpenter card signed by the master himself, buried in only a few of these decks. We're not going to lie to you; we doubt Ghosts of Mars will even make it to orbit, but the rated Carpenter fanatics will want to scoop these up, 'cause we're talking about the guy who made *Halloween*, after all. Available on Ebay! ([www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com))



## BLAIR'S DEATH SAUCES

US \$44.95 per six bottles

Sweet Satan in Hellfire, they don't call this Death Sauce for nothing! Actually, prior to the arrival of these fine sauces at the Rue Morgue offices, we had serious doubts as to their authenticity. Don't make the same mistake we did! One light dab of this stuff and you'll be bawling like a baby as you run for the keg!

Of course, if you dig that kind of masochism then you can now murder your bowels in any of the six available ways: Original Death, Jalapino Death, Sudden Death, After Death, Salsa de la Muerte (for the non-gringos) and the absolutely terrifying Possible Side Effects Sauce. This is no joke – although there are some mild variants in this lineup, the ones that say hot are CRAZY HOT. Our advice, buy the whole lot but, please, do yourself a favour and read the labels first. Each comes with its own plastic skull key chain for added value. Last ribs not included.

Available from [www.deathsauce.com](http://www.deathsauce.com)





**LIVING DEAD DOLLS II**  
**US \$24.99 to \$29.99**

There is absolutely no truth to the old adage that says you can get enough of a good thing. Look into the eyes of these adorable kids and try saying it to their faces! Of course you can't. That's because you can never say "no" to kids, particularly when they bear outward signs of advanced demonic possession.

The Living Dead Dolls are, bar none, the most beautifully twisted idea that has been brought to life for our collective edification. Series two offers a schoolhouse theme with a sacrilegious Catholic Girl, a bleeding Prom Queen, a gothic cheerleader, little Lou Sapphire (that's Lucifer for the slow ones out there), not to mention a pre-adolescent but post-execution Lizzie Borden. Halloween's around the corner and the class of 666 will be letting out, ready to run into your waiting arms!

Available from [www.mezco.net](http://www.mezco.net)



**TORTURED SOULS**  
**US \$7.99 to \$9.99**

Will you get a load of these guys?! The Swiss Family Robinson they ain't! We told you about Clive Barker and Todd McFarlane's unholy union back in *RM*#20, but we never thought the resulting abominations could be so wickedly cool! Of course, these gruesome figures now proudly reside at the *RM* offices, and we can't get over how detailed and truly twisted they are.

McFarlane wasn't kidding when he said he wanted to revolutionize the toy industry, and Barker was the guy to put him over the edge. From the grotesque *Scothe-Meister* to the unbelievable *Mangrod*, these *Tortured Souls* are for those who can handle body horror all the way. In other words: you. Get the set at [www.spawntoy.com](http://www.spawntoy.com).

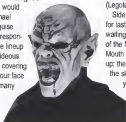
**MASKS FROM DISGUISE INC.**  
**US \$10.99 to \$11.99**

There's something about a good mask that always scares people. Look at Michael Myers, he knew a thing or two about instilling fear if I'd known less, I would have said that Michael bought his at Disguise

Inc., the folks responsible for the lineup of truly hideous

visages you see before you. Far from merely covering up your head, these things literally jump off your face with their original gruesome likenesses. Too many to choose from, but here are a few ideas for you as you plan your Hallowe'en

Go to [www.disguise.com](http://www.disguise.com).



**LORD OF THE RINGS**  
**COLLECTIBLES SERIES 1 & 2**  
**Busts: US \$50 to \$75**  
**Statues: US \$100 to \$150**

Even though J.R.R. Tolkien's book has always been associated with sword and sorcery, it's easy to overlook the enduring impact it has had on fans of horror. Gollum, the Wingwraiths, the Dark Lord Sauron and the land of Mordor, where the shadows lie. No doubt about it, *Lord of the Rings* is an epic narrative of good against the deepest, darkest, dankiest forces of evil, in all of their slithering glory!

That's why we suggest you line up to check these absolutely incredible collectibles from Sideshow Toys, the folks who specialize in the classic monsters of yesteryear. The series will bring you a lot to salivate your morbid eye, including the Orcs (a decrepit Orc Overseer and a horrifying Lurtz Orc). The likenesses of these figures are unerringly detailed with human and hobbit features that are truly uncanny in their authenticity. In fact, it's hard to believe they could have been done any better.

Series Two offers more horrors in the shapes of a *Mona Orc Swordsman*, *Orc Warrior* and *Pilmaster*, *Uruk-Kai Scouts* and the terrifying *Lurtz Captain*, along with members of the greater Fellowship (*Legolas*, *Gimli* and *Boromir* the traitor).

Sideshow seems poised to save the best for last with Series Three and beyond (we're waiting for the *Black Riders*, *Gothmog*, *Lord of the Nazgul*, and – our fave – the ghastly *The Mouth of Sauron* on his undead horse!). Heads up; these babies are going to be raining out of the sky when the movie hits theatres later this year and you may want to start clearing off the shelves. Beware the messengers of the dark . . .

Available from [www.sideshowtoy.com](http://www.sideshowtoy.com)



Classic  
cut

Mercury Theatre's Radio Production of

# THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

USA - 1938

Starring Dan Seymour, Orson Welles and Frank Readick  
Directed by Orson Welles and Paul Stewart  
Written by Howard Koch based on a story by H.G. Wells

This Mercury Theatre's radio adaptation of H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* in 1938 is still considered to be the most famous in radio history. Not only did the broadcast capture the ears of six million people, it also convinced an estimated one million of them that they were in the midst of a hostile takeover by Martians who were invading Grover's Mill, New Jersey and surrounding cities.

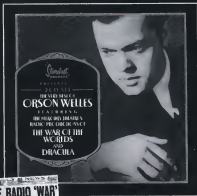
When Orson Welles initially decided to go forward with a radio show, it did not cross his mind that the adaptation would be taken as truth. In fact, he was initially disappointed with the script, claiming that nobody would believe a word of it. "We've got to do something about this," he was heard to say.

A series of accidents and coincidences transformed the presentation in the coming day. Under the direction of Welles (the voice of Professor Pierson), the first script was scrapped and hastily rewritten to simulate a real newscast along the lines of Archibald MacLeish's radio play *Air Raid*. In preparation for the broadcast Frank Readick, who played Carl Phillips, repeatedly listened to a recorded radio report of the Hindenburg crash. Then CBS censors passed the script back with name changes, including the substitution of the fictitious Park Plaza with the real Hotel Biltmore.

International events also played a part; growing concerns in the news caused radio listenership to increase exponentially in the week leading up to *The War of the Worlds*. A few days prior, Mussolini had issued proclamations in Italy to ban the films of Chaplin, Marx and the Ritz Brothers and, worse, Hitler had recently rolled into Austria. To add to the climate of fear and anticipation, it was the eve of Halloween, 1938. America was waiting for something to happen.

At the time, Mercury Theatre On the Air typically took a small share of the radio audience (3.6 percent), who preferred to tune into Edgar Bergen's and Charlie McCarthy's popular ventriloquist act on NBC. After listening to Bergen's opening comedy act, however, an estimated four million people simultaneously began dial switching, missing the disclaimer for Welles' production of *The War of the Worlds*. Dials landed on WABC just as "newscaster" Carl Phillips announced that a large meteorite had crashed on Wilmoth Farm in Grover's Mill. "It doesn't look very much like a meteor... it looks more like a huge cylinder," Phillips bespattered to the audience.

Intermittently, updates from Grover's Mill interrupted what seemed to be a scheduled musical program on WABC, and then newscasts were interrupted as the reporters lost contact with the



station. As Americans listened intently, reports trickled in that a living being had emerged from the cylinder, a tentacled thing with black eyes and saliva dripping from its huge mouth. "It's large as a bear and it glistens like wet leather," Phillips blurted into the airwaves.

What initially was said to be a giant meteorite speeding toward the earth eventually morphed into a fleet of hostile Martians in New York's backyard. The simulated mayhem was orchestrated perfectly, maybe too perfectly.

Momentarily, the CBS switchboard, the police and newspapers were inundated with telephone calls. People took to the streets with handkerchiefs over their mouths to protect themselves from the noxious gas which was supposedly being released by the alien invaders. Adding to the hysteria were reports from people who claimed they had actually seen the Martians.

At some point, Dan Seymour interrupted the broadcast to announce that it was only a dramatization, but the damage had been done. The throngs packed highways, train stations and bus terminals in a mad rush to escape the alien menace, but as the evening progressed, it became clear that the broadcast was purely fiction. The next day, newspapers across the US reported on the greatest hoax in modern times.

Even though Welles' *War of the Worlds* is remembered with fondness, there is a darker side to the story in a later broadcast in Spanish. After realizing it was a hoax, listeners in Ecuador attacked the local radio station, set it aflame, and killed 15 people in the process. Back at home, the participants in the New York production were propelled to stardom: scriptwriter Howard Koch went on to write *Casablanca*; musical director Bernard Herrmann landed *Psycho*; and executive producer John Houseman went on to win an Oscar for his performance in *The Paper Chase*. As for the 23-year-old Welles, he went on to direct *Citizen Kane* and become an icon of radio, stage and screen.

Now sixty-three years old, *War of the Worlds* still holds up as a work of striking quality. Welles' genius lay in his ability to isolate a prevalent fear of his time and to play on it. Stardust Records has recently re-released the Mercury Theatre's classic Halloween broadcast on CD, which also features a highly acclaimed production of *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, performed by Welles for CBS' radio show *First Person Singular*.

-Mary-Beth Hollyer



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