

I AM VIRGIN (2010) ♂♂

D: Sean Skelding. Adam Elliott Davis, Ron Jeremy, Amber Chase, Hank Cartwright, Melinda Ausserer. 90 mins. (Cheezy Flicks) 2/10

Virgin Robby (Davis) is the last living man in a world populated by terminally horny, giant-breasted, tattooed and body-pierced female vampires. Robby is a whiny geek who drives around all day wishing he could get laid but then when he encounters some naked vampire babes rolling around together, he runs away like a sissy. His time at home is divided between watching porn and making video podcasts complaining about how he wants to drop his virgin status. When he meets vampire Paul (Jeremy), he learns that he can have all the sex he wants; as long as he doesn't feel guilty about it, he'll never turn into a vampire. This moronic soft-core sex romp starts off promisingly enough with a good "nudie cutie" premise but soon over-stays its welcome. Nothing ever happens. Robby drives around with his dog and just peeps on vampires having sex. The vampires never attack him. There is no menace. The flick is presented like it is going to be a sexy spoof of *I Am Legend*, but there is nothing funny about it. The one thing the movie does well is convey the wasteland feeling of a deserted world. Some of these scenes are really well rendered and suggest a different film altogether. Diehard vamp-flick fans will probably give it a watch, but you'd do better to scope out Fred Olen Ray's *Bikini Frankenstein* or *Twilight Vamps* for real nudie-cutie monster thrills.

—Rob Freese

I SELL THE DEAD (2010) ♂♂♂♂

D: Glenn McQuaid. Dominic Monaghan, Larry Fessenden, Angus Scrimm, Ron Perlman, John Speridakos, Eileen Colgan. 85 mins. (MPI Home Video/IFC Films) 3/10

Another wonderful, wildly original low-budget indie slips through the cracks while bad big-budget remakes continue to flood the multiplex. Fortunately, this charmer should find an audience—MPI tends to handle its home entertainment releases well, and co-producer IFC will no doubt give it many airings. This is a remarkable achievement. Set in an atmospheric 19th-century Dublin, it was actually shot "on location" in 21st-century New York City and suburbs. You'd never know it to see it—I *Sell the Dead* is very much akin to watching a 1960s Hammer horror film, only with a self-aware camp that Hammer, as much as we love that studio, could never have pulled off. As professional, if somewhat bumbling body-snatchers, Monaghan and Fessenden shine. They're not the brightest bulbs in the lamp and have to deal with a blackmailing doctor, gleefully

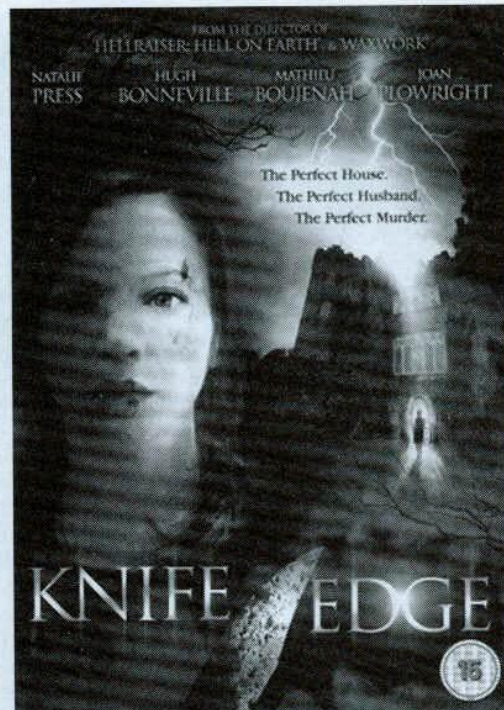
played by a scene-stealing Scrimm (*Phantasm*). Then there are the Murphy Brothers, who rule the body-snatching biz with a Mafia-like iron fist. The story is related in flashback, as Blake (Monaghan) is about to face the gallows. He agrees to tell his tale to Father Duffy (great character man Perlman, who chews the scenery and spits it out!). Starting as an apprentice to Grimes (Fessenden), Blake is soon the latter's clumsy but quasi-successful equal. The two find out where the money is: instead of wheeling and dealing in plain old corpses, the boys learn they can increase their income by selling the bodies of the undead—vampires, zombies, and even a cute little space alien! The film is a creepy, amusing delight from start to finish, with a twist ending that's not only screamingly funny but a genuine surprise. *I Sell the Dead* is a testament to what talented people can do with little money but a lot of spunk and love. An old fort in Staten Island, a state park on Long Island, a very old local cemetery, and some nice interiors shot in older local homes, and the film magically takes you across the pond and two centuries back. It's really quite a feat, and McQuaid and producer Fessenden pull it off brilliantly. On the basis of this film, the Academy should consider a new category: Best Ingenuity. MPI offers *I Sell the Dead* with audio commentary tracks, theatrical trailer, a lengthy making-of documentary, plus English and Spanish subtitle options.

—David Alex Nahmod

I'M NO DUMMY (2009) ♂♂♂

D: Brian W. Simon. Jeff Dunham, Jay Johnson, Jimmy Nelson, Tom Ladshaw, Lynn Trefzger. 86 mins. (Salient Media/Vivendi) 4/10

Just about everything you ever wanted to know about ventriloquism but were too "dumb" to ask is answered in Simon's highly entertaining look at the art of "venting." Via wide-ranging archival clips, the director pays tribute to past practitioners Edgar Bergen—yes, you could see his lips move but his characterizations were strong enough to enable him to carve out a ventriloquism career on *radio*—once-ubiquitous TV boomer babysitter Paul Winchell (with pals Jerry Mahoney and Knucklehead Smiff), and our hands-down, lips-locked fave Senor Wences, who brought an unmatched touch of cheerfully solipsistic Euro surrealism to his art. Still-working survivor and teacher Nelson (of Danny O'Day and Farfel fame) acts as a bridge between those venting legends and the current generation, including erstwhile *Soap* regular Johnson and relative newcomer Dunham, who brings a contempo Comedy Central-style crassness to his craft. Tricks of the trade—from lip control to rapid-fire vocal changes—are discussed by the experts; the necessary cross-section of skills, both conceptual and physical, are so precise that



top ventriloquists can be rightly compared to "five-tool" baseball players. The vocation does seem to appeal to a certain type of offbeat personality, but the film touches only lightly on the art's sinister side, mentioning *Child's Play's* Chucky but eschewing *Dead of Night* and its ilk. Like Mark Mazzarella's *Stories of the American Puppet* (VS #71), *I'm No Dummy* will draw you in even if you thought you had scant interest in the topic.

KNIFE EDGE (2009) ♂♂♂

D: Anthony Hickox. Natalie Press, Hugh Bonneville, Matthieu Boujenah, Tamsin Egerton, Jamie Harris, Karen Ferrari, Miles Ronayne, Joan Plowright. 93 mins. (E1 Entertainment) 4/10

Veteran horror hand Anthony (*Waxwork*) Hickox strikes again with an effective old-school thriller that conjures the Hammer-style suspense of (*Maniac*, *Paranoiac*, *Hysteria*) of yore. Press impresses as Emma, a Wall Street exec who chucks her corporate career to join her French hubby (Boujenah) and young son (Ronayne) at a lavish but isolated English countryside estate. Only one major drawback to that plan: the house appears to be haunted. Murderous activities from the mansion's bloody past play out before Emma's eyes as the mystery mounts, casting doubts on our heroine's sanity and pointing fingers of suspicion at possible conspirators in her midst. Highlights include a terrific psychedelic hallucination sequence, Plowright's turn as a possibly sinister nanny and a couple of late-arriving plot twists. Hickox knows how to spring his scares, so viewers willing to go along with the farfetched premise should get their shillings worth.

—The Phantom