

Nancy Naglin's ART-HOUSE VIDEO

DEATH LAID AN EGG (1968) ♂♂♂

D: Giulio Questi. Gina Lollobrigida, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Ewa Aulin, Jean Sobieski. 86 mins. (Cult Epics) 11/17

One of the quirkiest giallos ever, director/scripser Questi's (with co-writer Franco Arcalli) **Death Laid an Egg** (released internationally as **La Morte Ha Fatto L'uovo**, **Love Laid an Egg**, **A Curious Way to Love**, **Death Trap**, and the aptly titled **Plucked**) swirls with futuristic themes and style, titillates with then-exciting sex and social change and, incongruously, fixes its sophisticated characters and their triangular to-the-death love toss-up on a high-tech chicken farm (!). Marco (the perennially suave Trintignant), married to haughty farm owner Anna (Lollobrigida), alternates between playing **Belle de Jour** sex games with prostitutes—he films himself “killing” them—and the genius tasks of being an amateur geneticist breeding boneless chickens. Enter Anna's cousin Gabrielle (Aulin, of **Candy** fame), hired as a live-in secretary, and suddenly there's a lot of women combing their hair in underwear, soft nudity, and inexplicable, quick-cut and very au courant car crash imagery as Marco and Anna begin an affair and plot to run away together. Unbeknownst to Marco, Gabrielle has a husband, Mondaini (Sobieski); together they're plotting to kill Anna and pin it on pervy killer Marco. Gabrielle will inherit the expected profits from the mutant birds. Part of the enduring, '60s Euro fashionista buzz is seeing marvelously dressed characters strolling past a vast expanse of caged birds dominated by an ominous machine that grinds the chicken feed. You know there's going to be fowl play. Marco, ready for some sex games, finds a dead Anna in his hotel room. Gabrielle and Mondaini never suspected Marco play-acted his murders with willing victims who were paid handsomely. But you'll never guess who ends up as chicken feed. The film radiates the mystique of late '60s sex chicanery, contemporaneous experimentation with impressionistic cinematography, and, memorably, Euro fashion, style and esthetic that was exciting then and wonderful to enjoy now in Cult Epic's Blu-ray. Extras include theatrical trailer, lobby cards photo gallery, and isolated score by Bruno Maderna.

FAHRENHEIT 451 (1966) ♂♂♂♂

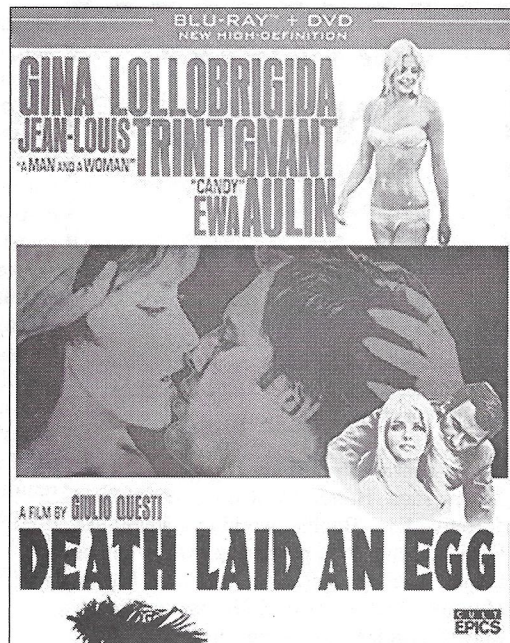
D: Francois Truffaut. Julie Christie, Oskar Werner, Cyril Cusack, Bee Duffell, Anton Diffring, Jeremy Spenser, Alex Scott. 112 mins. (Universal Studios)

In 1960's **Time Machine**, H.G. Wells (Rod Taylor), transported to a post-apocalyptic future, marvels at the absence of books, survived only by fragmentary audio recordings on spinning discs, considered junk by humankind's heirs, the easily manipulated, child-like Eloi. With **Fahrenheit 451** (the temperature at which printed paper incinerates), Ray Bradbury went a step further, imagining a post-Orwellian, future fascist state where knowledge is prohibited, the populace, propped up on opioids is ordered to stay simple and happy, and books are banned. In today's world, where no one reads and fake news is king, both films are unnerving and timely again. Werner, best known for **The Spy Who Came in from the Cold** and **Ship of Fools**, turns in a solid, studiously understated performance as the obedient, mind-wiped fireman Guy Montag, charged with the most patriotic of duties—finding and burning books—who slowly develops a sense of curiosity. What better way to awaken than to be charmed by a chatty, more multifaceted neighbor, Christie, who does double duty as the inquisitively appealing Clarisse and as Montag's gorgeous, dulled, drugged-up, nincompoop of a wife, the robot-like Linda. Houses are raided, the interactions between Montag and his insufferable boss Captain Beatty (Cusack) are eternally depressing, and Linda and her gal pals, pre-feminist icons, are driven to want to suppress all feelings, save for lust. But it's the set design (by an uncredited Syd Cain and Tony Walton) that steals the show. The esthetic is Mid-Century Modern, Scandinavian minimalism and prophetic interactive, wall-mounted TV/computer screens, mesmerizing Linda with infantile social media connections. Soon Montag is reading contraband and stashing books in the bathroom. One unforgettable scene revolves around Clarisse's librarian-like friend, “The Book Lady” (Duffell), who torches herself along with her library rather than be tortured into giving up the names of fellow readers. There's a refuge through the woods and past the train tracks where dissidents seek to go. Be prepared for a literary and ironic jolt when you see how Bradbury combines the survival of the thinking human with the preservation of books. Extras on Universal's Blu-ray include a making-of featurette, a discussion with Bradbury, audio commentary with costar Christie, a look at Bernard Herrmann's score, photo & still gallery and original title sequence. A TV movie version, with Michael Shannon, is slated to surface this year.

THE WITCHES (1967) ♂♂♂

D: Luchino Visconti, Mauro Bolognini, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Franco Rossi, Vittorio De Sica. Silvana Mangano, Annie Girardot, Alberto Sordi, Toto, Ninetto Davoli, Clint Eastwood, Pietro Torrisi. 105 mins. (Arrow Video/MVD) 1/18

Produced by Dino de Laurentiis with a brassy, syncopated score by Ennio Morricone and Piero Piccioni, **The Witches** features five short tales about the roles and plight of women but, most



memorably, is a glittering showcase distilling the peculiarities of the Italian psyche in contact with '60s sensibility, rebellion and fashion. A versatile Mangano appears in all five segments, first as a fashion model, trapped by fame and subjugated by an unfeeling agent/husband in the most fully realized and enduringly poignant of the tales, Visconti's powerful mini-feature, **The Witch Burns Alive**. Next, she's the callous woman driver in Bolognini's mordant **Civic Sense** who offers to drive an injured truck driver (a marvelously moaning and complaining Sordi) to the hospital but instead uses him to speed through traffic, dumping him on the beach at destination's end. In Pasolini's charming absurdist fable **The Earth as Seen from the Moon**, commedia dell' arte clowns Ciancicato (Toto) and Baciu (Davoli), brightened with a '60s color palette and outlook, entertain with their foolish efforts to get a wife for Toto and a mother for Baciu before Toto falls for the beautiful deaf girl (Mangano) who, returning to life after a staged suicide for charity ruse gone wrong, shows the magical link between life and death. Rossi's hyperventilating social commentary **The Girl from Sicily** skewers tradition when a heartbroken Sicilian gal confesses a less-than-serious beau treated her to a flirtatious smile and her father solves the honor problem by killing the lad's entire family. Eastwood, playing—with acceptable ennui—a transplanted American, once oversexed but now exhausted and aloof, married to a desperate and bored housewife, is the star attraction of **The Witches** in De Sica's extended fantasy segment **An Evening Like the Others**. Eastwood putters and snoozes while his wife (Mangano), bewailing the entrapment of her role, escapes into elaborate, over-the-top flights of fancy involving Felliniesque décor, hoped-for sex, runway walks, stadium crowds and, in a nod to American influences, even an appearance by a leering Batman (Torrisi). Extras include a new interview with Ninetto Davoli, audio commentary, booklet and more. ♂