

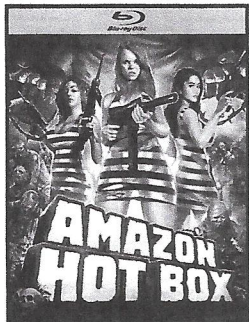
# Dementia

on the genre's more gratuitous staples — a nude shower room catfight; a vicious, lesbian cell block queen (Tristan Risk); plus skimpy, low-cut, mini-dress prison wardrobe. There's also demented Dr. Greely (Paul McComiskey) gleefully gassing inmates with an experimental pleasure drug that goes horribly awry,

while Warden Inga prefers old-fashioned physical pain with her (occasionally malfunctioning) Torture Machine; impressively skuzzy Jett Bryant is a captured pot smuggler who's declared Rattica's latest, unwilling El Presidente; and sexy US operative Agent Six (Jordan Phipps) sneaks into the country, leaving behind a bloody trail of (literally) heartless men on her way to assassinate this new leader. Complete with a climax that includes a prison break, armed zombies, unexpected romance, and some extremely twisted pleasures, Bickert crams all of this exploitative fun into only 83 minutes, and makes excellent use of Savannah's Fort Pulaski National Monument. Though outlandishly gruesome and tasteless, the film also manages to be ridiculously funny, with Bickert continually upending expectations and characters exposing unpredictable shadings, as the film puts a fresh, absurdly over-the-top spin on its women-in-prison tropes. The Blu-ray includes a commentary with Bickert and co-producer/assistant-director Brian K. Williams.

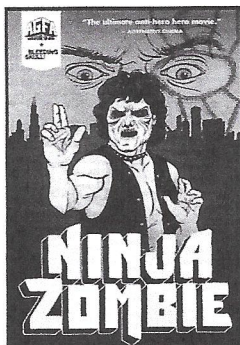
A shattered marriage, a young child and a middle-aged bloke who feels his life careening out of control forms the foundation of Roger Donaldson's 1981 New Zealand drama **SMASH PALACE** (Arrow Academy), featuring an astounding performance from NZ character actor legend Bruno Lawrence (THE QUIET EARTH)... Former race car driver Al Shaw (Lawrence) owns the sprawling Smash Palace Auto Wreckage yard on the North Island, along with young wife Jacqui (Anna Jemison [née: Anna Maria Monticelli])

and daughter Georgie (seven-year-old Greer Robson). A hard-headed, short-tempered sort, Al argues with bored, dissatisfied Jacqui about selling this automotive graveyard, and when their relationship takes some disturbing turns — emotionally and physically — she finally leaves him. Making matters even worse, Jacqui starts dating local cop and Al's drinking buddy Ray (Keith Aberdein, who later penned Geoff Murphy's UTU, co-starring Lawrence), with Al's anger and resentment reaching a boil after his ex initiates legal action to keep him away from his kid. Arming himself, Al takes Georgie on an impromptu vacation in the bush, as a manhunt ensues, with the escalating situation taking several dangerous turns in



the final 30 minutes. Lawrence (who died in 1995 at the age of only 54) manages to make Al achingly real and surprisingly relatable, despite all of the shit his character pulls, along with a few truly courageous, all-too-revealing moments. Best of all, he and Robson share a believably sweet rapport, particularly during their makeshift birthday celebration in a run-down old camper. Filled with wild plot twists that would never occur in comparable Hollywood fare, authentically weather-beaten locations, and effective support from Des Kelly as concerned grease monkey Tiny and Margaret Umbers (who later reteamed with Lawrence in BRIDGE TO NOWHERE and DEATH WARMED UP) as a chemist shop hostage, this is an offbeat, unflinchingly powerful vision. The Blu-ray includes a commentary by Donaldson and stunt driver Steve Millen, plus a terrific new, 53-minute making-of documentary containing interviews with Donaldson, Aberdein, Robson, and Kelly; the film's cinematographer, assistant director, editor, and art director; and even the current owner of the film's wrecking yard location, Horopito Motors.

Shot on Super 8 in 1991, with editing and post-production finished two years later — only to end up shelved for 25 years! — **NINJA ZOMBIE** (American Genre Film Archive/Bleeding Skull) is a brain-fryingly idiotic kung-fu action/horror extravaganza from writer-director Mark Bessenger, with enough cut-rate fights, stunts and unintentional laughs to keep any fans of old-school, do-it-yourself schlock entertained. Adding to its nostalgia factor, this print was transferred from Bessenger's BETA masters, with all of the random hairs, gunk and bubbly film splices intact... When Prof. Orlan Sands (Michael Correll) is threatened by the diabolical, ponytailed, sloppily face-tattooed Spithrachne (Terry Dunn) and his Red Spider Cult martial arts minions, macho best friend Jack Chase (John Beaton Hill) intervenes, only to wind up dead. With the help of a "Master Mystic," Orlan digs up Jack's fresh grave, resurrects his corpse and, voila, it's a grey-skinned, craggy-faced, ninja zombie, who'd rather kick ass than chow down on human flesh or brains. It seems that Spithrachne wants to get his grubby mitts on the legendary Urn of Prometheus, with Orlan fed mind-controlling spider eggs, Jack's old fiancée Maggie taken captive, and control over undead Jack continually switching hands. Primarily shot around Antioch, Illinois, the film features wall-to-wall horrible acting and slapdash production values, but it's impossible not to smile at the sight of a motorcycle-riding zombie busting through flimsy pasteboard walls and coming to the rescue. Or zombie Jack decked out in a "bad-ass" black leather vest and studded collar; literally tearing apart Spithrachne's lackeys in the middle of an actual cemetery; or peeping on his old fiancée for a smidgen of gratuitous nudity. Complete with a rockin' "Ninja Zombie" theme song by The Beat Monkeys, it's a goofy but sporadically amusing blast of home-made dementia.



The DVD includes a director's commentary; minutes of rough, behind-the-scenes footage, including a fire-stunt gone wrong; a recent interview with John Beaton Hill; plus Bessenger's ea nine-minute IT COULD HAPPEN TO ANYONE which a young man has a strange encounter his home, complete with a telegraphed twist.

Lensed in Spain and Italy, and featuring a lot of American marquee-value stars, 1968's **A MUTE TO PRAY, A SECOND TO DIE** (Kino Lor Studio Classics) arrived in US theatres at the height of the spaghetti western craze, but was a sort of generic action-outing that eventually killed this sub-genre... With a \$10,000 bounty on his head, gunslinger Clay McCord (Alex Cord) takes every lowlife and lawman in the region after h



But McCord is a struggling with so personal demons hence the flashback to his childhood and epilepsy father — with recent painful spasms his gun arm convincing Clay the similarly debilitating fate lies in his future. Hiding out the dusty, rundown outlaw community

Escondido, sultry servant girl Laurinda (Nicola Machiavelli) tends McCord's wounds, cooks grub and falls for this wanted lug. Meanwhile, the Mexico territorial governor Lem Carter (Robert Ryan, who doesn't show up until an hour into story) offers a blanket amnesty to all criminals which sounds good to McCord. Unfortunately, Texas' Marshal, Roy Colby (multi-Oscar-nominee Arthur Kennedy), is blocking any outlaws from actually getting into town to take advantage of a deal... Though relatively bloodless, there's an outlandishly high body count, as McCord guns down anyone who gets in his way, and few supporting characters survive to see the end credits. Scripted by future Empire Pictures bigwig Alt Band (who also produced the film) and upcoming Oscar-nominee Louis Garfinkle (for THE DE HUNTER's original story), the melodrama is overbaked, its amnesty subplot is a mess, and although the direction by Franco Giraldi (SUG COLT) lacks any distinctive style, his important castmembers keep it reasonably amusing. Cord a solid presence and capably handles his role "we can't afford a stuntman" physical demerol (such as being strung up, shirtless, in the middle of town), while Kennedy and Ryan both share amusing interactions with Cord's outlaw, with three participating in the finale's farmhouse siege. The Blu-ray includes an extended international ending — four minutes longer, and far more do-beat — plus a commentary by spaghetti-west connoisseur (and REPO MAN director) Alex Cord who's knowledgeable enough about the film leaves too many dead spots throughout his tre

Frustrated by their lack of success in Hollywood, wannabe-director Charles Davis teamed up with two friends, actor Douglas Wilson screenwriter Bob Wehling, and decided to sin make their own movie — a black-and-white \$42,000 production, with an eight-day shoot schedule and no-name cast. **GET OUTTA TOWN** (Alpha Video) may not have been the bold thing card they'd hoped (after sneak previewing late-1958 under its working title, THE DAY KE CAME HOME, the film was eventually double-billed with THE AMAZING TRANSPARENT M nearly two years later), but it's an appealingly pulpy, 63-minute revenge-drama with loads