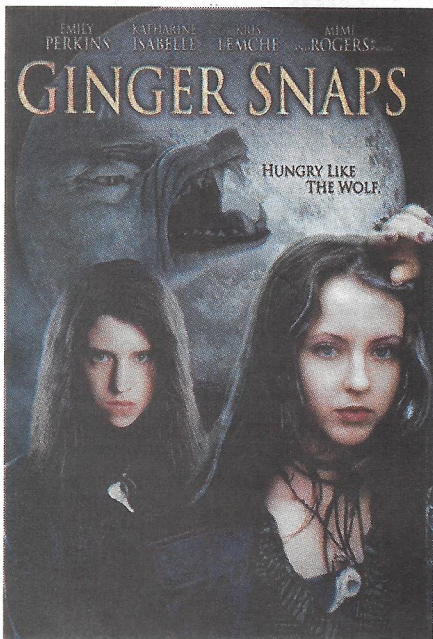


## BACK TO THE BELCOURT 12 HOURS OF TERROR! By Rob Freese

On October 21st, 2017, Nashville's Belcourt Theater played host to its annual **12 Hours of Terror** marathon. It started with great anticipation as costumed attendees in line compared notes as to how many previous Terrorthons they had attended over the years and how far they'd gotten with each one. (For the record, this was my fifth, the fourth accompanied by my bride-to-be Sherri, who came decked out in full witch costume while I went the trick-or-treat route in my **Halloween III** Pumpkin mask and Carl Kolchak tee. Also for the record, we've stayed until the final film every time.) There was also much speculation as to what the roundup of titles would include, as the Belcourt kept the list of films a secret beyond the first two titles.

Nashville's all-monster rock band the Boo Dudes took to the stage to get everyone cranked up. The trailer for Al Adamson's **Dracula vs. Frankenstein** played on the big screen behind them in a wash of psychedelic colors as the creeps belted out their popular ditty "Dracula's 2nd DUI." The show finally got off to a loud, colorful, surreal but ultimately slow and boring start with Dario Argento's **Inferno**. The 35mm Fox Archival print looked fantastic, but the older I get the more I realize I just don't connect to this movie. I know it's supposed to be a nightmare fever dream, but scenes of Leigh McCloskey opening a letter to the accompaniment of Keith Emerson's blasting, nerve-fraying synth-rock score made me wonder why Argento was trying to trick me into



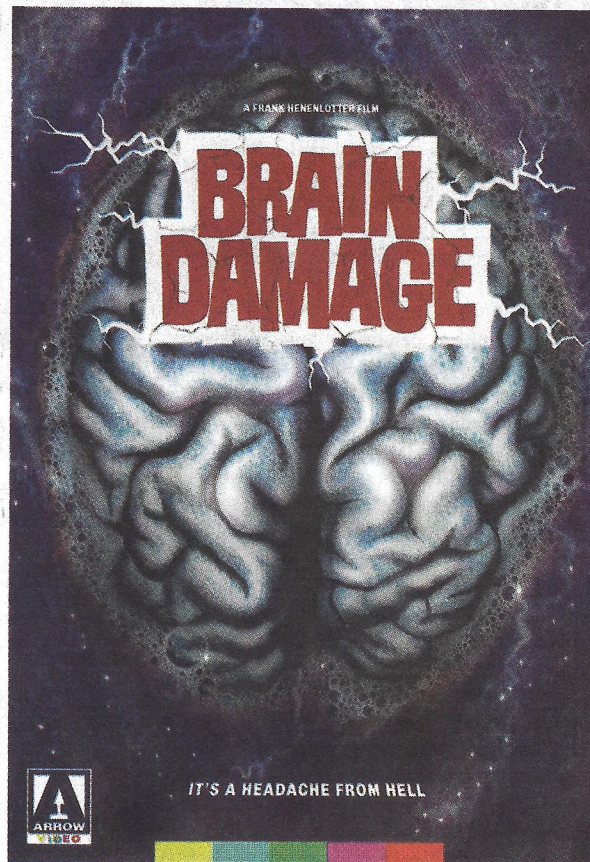
thinking something exciting was happening on screen. I became extremely fidgety way before the film's halfway point.

The proceedings got back on track with the superior teenage werewolf tale **Ginger Snaps**, courtesy of director John Fawcett's personal 35mm print, the only 35mm print of this film in existence. As far as I'm concerned, the **12 Hours of Terror** officially started with the marathon's second feature and hit all its high points over the next couple entries. A wonderfully scratched and red-tinted 35mm print of **Dead & Buried** followed and garnered the night's biggest audience reaction when poor Freddie, already beaten, butchered and burned beyond recognition, received his hypodermic needle to the eyeball demise. A giant gasp filled the theater as the entire audience, moving as one, jerked away from the screen in a single spastic wave. Good job, Gary Sherman, Stan Winston and Company! Your flick still works nearly 40 years later!

Film four kept everyone awake giggling and gagging as Frank Henenlotter's **Brain Damage** filled the screen with psychedelic weirdness. It was 90 solid minutes of nervous laughter from an audience who never knew what was coming next. Local horror host Dr. Gangrene was on hand to introduce the film and give brief props to Elmer voice actor and late, great legendary Cool Ghoul John Zacherle, who he praised as being the original horror host who "all the rest of us were inspired by."

Film five, **Dark Waters**, pretty much derailed the Terrorthon for me, a grueling endurance test about island nuns versus an ambiguous sea monster. We were warned that this film was not for everyone and many people left before it was over. They were the lucky ones. I know many consider it a '90s foreign fright classic, but I am not among those fans. It was followed by a movie I felt completely "wasted a turn," **Jennifer's Body**. I mean, I appreciated Diablo Cody's sharp dialogue and the mix of horror and humor, but I've never had any desire to see it, knowing if I ever did want to watch it that it is available in every bargain movie bin everywhere physical media is still sold, as well as all over cable and Netflix. It is literally *everywhere!* And, unfortunately, it showed up on the Belcourt's screen too.

Stretching beyond sunrise into mid-morning, the final flick, **Grave Robbers**, splashed across the screen. This lame-brained, late-'80 Mexican slasher film is also known as **Ladones de Tumbas**. It was presented with subtitles, which is asking a lot of an audience 10 1/2 hours deep into



this 12-hour movie marathon; happily, it became apparent early on that this film had no real plot whatsoever, and the subtitles were just the characters' names being screamed over and over again as the mad monk buried his sharp axe into their empty skulls.

As always, the Belcourt proved a gracious host. There was excellent food available not only from the concession stand but from a food truck that stayed for all seven movies. Between the movies there were more tunes from the Boo Dudes, a costume contest, a food-eating contest, and a horror paperback giveaway to encourage more horror reading. A huge effort was made by the staff and it was much appreciated. (I do hope the Belcourt considers discontinuing its "mystery lineup" strategy for 2018.) Eyes burning in the morning sun, we were all awarded "I Survived Belcourt's Twelve Hours of Terror" buttons as we lined up for our annual "survivors photo" in front of the theater.

If you live in the Nashville area or are close enough to make Nashville a day trip, I really urge you to check out the various shows the Belcourt offers throughout the year. This past year has included not only a regular offering of the finest new independent films but retrospectives that pay tribute to the work of Dario Argento, as well as a series of great giallos and regular retro midnight shows of stuff like the original **Friday the 13th**, **The Rocky Horror Picture Show**, **The Room**, **Smithereens** and many, many more classic films of all types. Check them out at [belcourt.com](http://belcourt.com) or find them on Facebook. ☿