

**“They didn't just think it was unnecessary to make it; they just loathed it.”**

**Michael Powell**

Carl and I, just two dreamers, we came to the premiere in London in dinner jackets, black tie, and saw it together, with everybody, the special-critics invitation people, and they all came out afterwards and passed by us and nobody spoke to us—just like in the movies! And the press came out saying, “What a terrible, disgusting, loathsome piece of shit. For God's sake, wash it down the toilet. Take it off.” They used language like that. I was just—dazed. I had no idea the critics were so innocent. So I said to the distributor, Nat Cohn, “Look, let's do what somebody did years and years ago when they made a film of a Broadway play, *Mother Goddamn*.” It all took place in a whorehouse, and that was a bit new then. I said, “Let's take space in all the papers and say this is what the critics said—this unbelievable abuse—come and judge for yourselves. Keep the film running. It'll do.” But they wouldn't do it. They took it off that night; they yanked it. And it was booked already for all 'round the country. They probably made about fifty prints. They took it out of release, and Anglo-Amalgamated sold it to somebody for television and showed it in black and white here. It took me a long time later on, when I had the chance, with the help of Martin Scorsese; we discovered where the negative was and what sort of state it was in and saved it. ☘

**HIGH MARKS**

For related suspense, scope out Francis Searle's 1951 noir *Cloudburst* (MGM Limited Collection DVD), co-adapted by *Peeping Tom* scripter Leo Marks from his novel. Sort of an early, textured Brit *Death Wish*, the film stars Robert Preston as a Canadian espionage expert and former WW II resistance fighter who uses his commando skills when he embarks on a measured revenge mission following his wife's random murder. A moral inquiry as well as a thriller, *Cloudburst* boasts some surprisingly brutal touches for its time and place. Also available, via Olive Films, is a crisp new Blu-ray edition of *One of Our Aircraft Is Missing* (1942), *The Archers'* tense account of downed RAF fliers hiding from Nazis in Holland during the early days of WWII. Criterion Collection, meanwhile, has a special edition DVD of the late, great George Romero's professed fave film, *The Archers'* elegant fable *Tales of Hoffmann*; hopefully a Blu-ray will follow in the near future.

**Rob Freese's  
SLASH-O-RAMA!**

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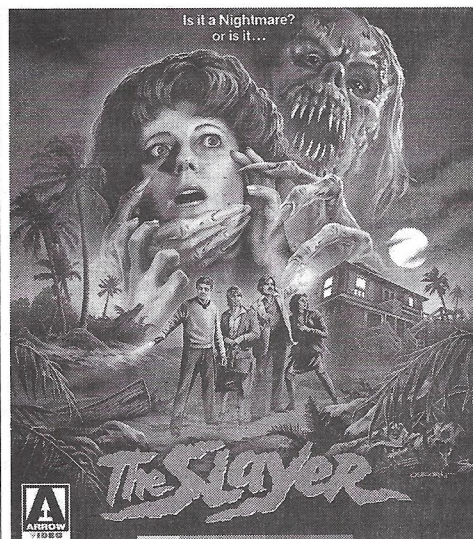
**THE SLAYER** (1982) ☘☘☘

D: J.S. Cardone. Sarah Kendall, Frederick J. Flynn, Carol Kottenbrook, Alan McRae, Michael Holmes, Carl Kraines. 90 mins.

Kay (Kendall) is an artist going through a surreal phase in her career as her warped dreams begin inspiring her artwork. With her husband Eric (Flynn), she joins her brother David (McRae) and his wife Brooke (Kottenbrook) for a week-long, off-season getaway on a fishing island. They are pretty much the only inhabitants, but Kay begins to feel the presence of something evil, something from her dreams. Convinced her dreams can come to life and kill them if she sleeps, she awakens to see Eric's severed head next to her in bed, then others begin to go missing until Kay is alone to face her nightmare monster. Cardone's directorial debut is a solid chiller that some claim may have inspired Wes Craven's similarly themed *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. It didn't, but it was a nice change of pace from all the teen slashers of the era. It follows the slasher formula but focuses the terror on young adults, and the dream stalker is a welcome switch from the overabundance of heavy-breathing psychos filling cinema screens of the time. The film never got much of a shake in theaters and later appeared on a big box double feature VHS cassette with Fred Olen Ray's *Scalps* from Continental Video, and it was this cut version that most fans first saw. (This very same VHS, in good condition, currently fetches some decent prices on eBay.) Since that videotape went out of print, *The Slayer* has not been widely seen. It did manage to land on the U.K.'s list of Video Nasties, and various VHS and DVD editions came out over the years, but the film remained relatively rare and hard to come by in the States. Arrow Video rectifies that with this beautifully realized Blu-ray/DVD combo presenting the film uncut for the first time. Extras include multiple commentaries, interviews, a tour of where the film was shot on Tybee Island, Georgia, still gallery and theatrical trailer. Kendall does a great job as the mostly hysterical Kay, while Robert Short's effects are inventive and squirm-inducing. (Watch for the severed head's bloody teardrops.) The ending is a little clunky but doesn't ruin the film's overall effect. This is a fun slasher shocker from the early '80s that deserves fright fans' attention. ☘

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**David Annandale's  
THRILLER THEATER!**

**THE STRANGER** (1946) B&W ☘☘☘

D: Orson Welles. Edward G. Robinson, Loretta Young, Orson Welles, Philip Merivale, Richard Long, Konstantin Shayne. 95 mins. (\$29.95 Blu-ray Olive Films) 8/17

UN War Crimes investigator Wilson (Robinson) lets convicted Nazi Meinike (Shayne) escape, hoping this smaller fish will lead him to the big fish: Franz Kindler (Welles), architect of the Holocaust. Wilson trails Meinike to the small town of Harper, Connecticut, where Kindler has taken on the identity of Charles Rankin, history teacher, about to marry the naïve Mary Longstreet (Young). Wilson loses Meinike, and Kindler kills his former underling, so though Wilson has his suspicions, he cannot prove that Rankin is Kindler. To do that, he will need Mary's help, and she will have to confront shattering truths about her marriage. Though rarely mentioned in the same breath as *Citizen Kane* or *Touch of Evil*, *The Stranger* is nonetheless a gripping thriller. The expressionist shadows of the prologue give way to deceptively sun-dappled Harper, only to return with a vengeance for the climax, and the steel resolve that Young's Mary shows in that climax is a deeply satisfying transformation of her character. Welles is by turns suave, paranoid and terrifying, while Robinson effortlessly conjures an aura of low-key relentlessness. Striking, too, is the town of Harper, whose inhabitants appear to inhabit a bubble that has shielded them from the War and from the need to think about the wider world at all. In its portrayal of just how easily Kindler/Rankin inserts himself into the town's life, his secrets kept by the genuinely ignorant and by the willfully so, the film feels arguably even more chillingly relevant than it was in 1946. This is tense, smart filmmaking and well worth rediscovering, especially in the form of the lovely new transfer on Olive's Blu-ray. Extras include an audio commentary by Nora Fiore and a booklet essay by Dr. Jennifer Lynde Barker. ☘