



QUEUED UP

BY BRYAN REESMAN

A Ghost Story (2017)

The set-up: After his untimely death, a young man (Casey Affleck) returns in ghostly form to his home to watch his wife (Rooney Mara) painfully resume her life. After she moves away, he remains anchored to the property as new tenants come to occupy the space. His identity begins dissipating as his disembodied spirit becomes part of a much larger time continuum.

The breakdown: The idea of a spook story in which the spirit is

represented by someone wearing a sheet with black eye holes was originally conceived as a joke by writer-director, David Lowery. But he ultimately crafted a serious, thought-provoking tale that broaches the topics of loss, heartbreak, the passage of time, and where we ultimately fit in this universe. It's heady stuff and while the pace drags during the first third of the movie, give the film some time to lead you down a rewarding metaphysical path. A



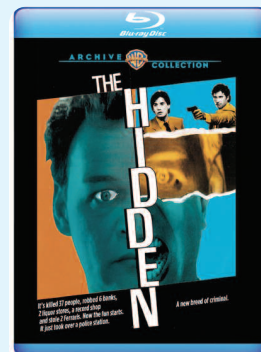
few scares are injected to play to genre expectations, but this smart if uneven film appeals more to the head than the gut.

The Hidden (1987)

The set-up: When upstanding citizens with no criminal records suddenly commit acts of mayhem and murder, L.A. cop Tom Beck (Michael Nouri) is baffled. Once he is teamed with quirky FBI agent, Lloyd Gallagher (Kyle McLachlan), who has intimate but cryptic knowledge of the killing spree, they take off on a wild ride chasing a body-swapping alien whose end game is not clear. But it must be stopped before further carnage is created.

The breakdown: Clearly

influenced by *The Terminator* in narrative, look, and score, *The Hidden* still manages to be an original sci-fi/horror hybrid injected with a tongue-in-cheek sensibility. Nouri and McLachlan possess great chemistry, while Jack Sholder's cocksure direction keeps the movie firing on all cylinders. This '80s cult treasure also offers a great travelogue of late '80s L.A., including a seedy Hollywood and hipper Melrose Avenue that, depending upon your age, you either forgot about



or never experienced. Warner Archive Collection carries over the director commentary track and special effects footage from the 2000 DVD release.

Innocent Blood (1992)

The set-up: A sexy vampire (Anne Parillaud) in Pittsburgh needs fresh blood and decides to feast upon local mafioso. But when she fails to fully drain a mob kingpin (Robert Loggia) who then comes back to life, she wrangles the assistance of an undercover cop (Anthony LaPaglia) to help her track down the bloodsucking don before he creates an army of undead wise guys.

The breakdown: Director John

Landis' last great film, *Innocent Blood* churns the horror and gangster genres into a gory comedy blend. Parillaud exudes sensuality and charisma as her guise of innocent ingénue masks the face of an experienced killer, and the movie itself makes us squirm at the violence while laughing at the gallows humor. Loggia revels playing the mobster who becomes intoxicated by his newfound undead powers. It's also fun to

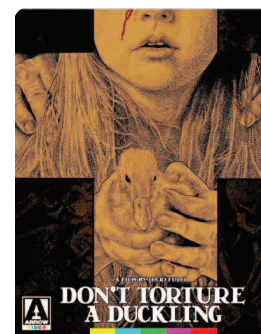


see Don Rickles in a vampire flick. Recalling the blood-drenched fun of *An American Werewolf In London*, *Innocent Blood* is an underrated gem.

Don't Torture A Duckling (1972)

The set-up: A small Italian town in the mountains becomes an epicenter of tragedy when young boys are murdered by a mysterious assailant. The superstitious locals don't know what to do or even who is really at fault. Is the local witch really the heartless killer? Is it the recently returned heiress who teases the young boys with her sexuality? And who will stop the killings?

The breakdown: Before director Lucio Fulci made gory classics, like *Zombie* and *City of the Living Dead*, he turned out this weird little giallo that, due to its un-PC nature, would not get made the same way today. Due to the unsavory nature of many of the protagonists, the story keeps you guessing and is matched by some intriguing images, although the low grade gore effects will more likely make you



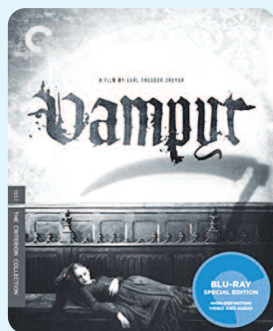
laugh than cringe. For fans of Fulci's work, it is still worth checking out. Arrow Video's bonus features include interviews, commentary, and a 1988 audio interview with Fulci himself.

Vampyr (1932)

The set-up: A young man (Julian West) obsessed with the occult comes to the aid of a suburban Parisian family whose daughter is being preyed upon by a vampire. In his quest to help track down the villain, he undertakes a hellish journey that includes an out of body experience where he sees himself paralyzed in a coffin and ready to be buried.

The breakdown: Carl Theodor Dreyer's take on the vampire myth – adapted from Sheridan Le Fanu's

book, *In a Glass Darkly* – contains a few plot holes and lapses in logic, but he certainly conjured arresting images that remain enigmatic 85 years later, including strange shadows that do the bidding of their mysterious master. Perhaps the best moment is the scene where the infected daughter, beginning to feel the blood thirst overtake her, grins wickedly at her sibling. There are no fangs or glowing eyes – her maniacal expression alone is chilling. Criterion offers some nice



extras to re-examine this surrealist German work, including an in-depth visual essay, the original screenplay, the short story *Carmilla*, and liner notes essays.

Children Of The Corn (1984)

The set-up: After Vicky Baxter and Burt Stanton (*Terminator* star, Linda Hamilton, and *Thirtysomething's* Peter Horton, respectively) get lost driving through the cornfields of Nebraska, they enter a nearly deserted town whose only inhabitants are a violent cult of bloodthirsty children. And their leader is a twisted, megalomaniac teen (John Franklin) who wants to sacrifice Vicky to their vengeful god, sending the grown adults on the run from armed and dangerous

kids. **The breakdown:** This adaptation of the Stephen King short story – think *Lord Of The Flies* on demonic steroids – manages to be effectively creepy with a majority of the film taking place during daylight. While not as overtly scary as it was for teens in the '80s, *Children Of The Corn* remains gruesome fun with a few good scares. (Inexplicably, it has spawned eight sequels and a remake, with a ninth sequel reportedly on the way). Sure to be



please longtime fans, Arrow's deluxe edition features some previous Anchor Bay DVD features while offering a color, fold out poster, new liner notes, a plethora of new interviews, and a 1983 short film inspired by the same King story.

They Look Like People (2015)

An aimless young man named Wyatt (MacLeod Andrews) crashes with his old college roommate Christian (Evan Dumouchel), but the latter has no clue that his old friend is hearing voices that warn him of a secret alien takeover. Scared of what is happening, Wyatt begins stockpiling supplies and weapons in the basement, and there is a real possibility that his schizophrenia could completely

take hold of him and allow him to harm others. First time writer-director, Perry Blackshear, does not go the obvious route with the material. It's a slow burn movie that builds to a strong climax. Wyatt's breaks with reality and vivid nightmares are scary, but Blackshear digs beneath the surface to humanize him, particularly when Christian must ascertain out how to cope with the crisis. It's a rare



horror/psychological thriller film that confronts mental illness without reverting to clichés.

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