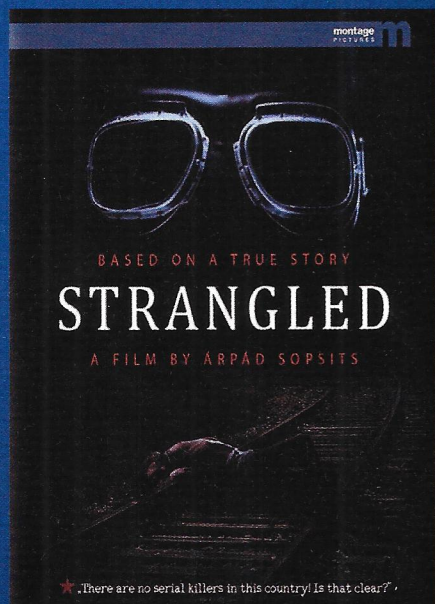


film really pushed the boat with its violence as it felt wholly real. There was no need to show every bit of each murder and he could have achieved the same effect by implying violence.

Moving beyond that, the rest of the film is pretty damn good and although no one, in particular, stands above the crowd, everyone does a grand job to keep the film ticking along. Gábor Jászberényi is great as the wrongly accused man, his performance is heart-breaking and will keep you guessing along the way. Meanwhile, Zsolt Anger and



Zsolt Trill are equally as solid in their role and work hard to fully realise their characters.

On reflection, although it is an interesting thriller there is no denying how brutally intense this film becomes thanks to Sopsit's glaringly obvious lust for violence. But, if you can look beyond this, audiences can look forward to watching a film that will keep the more patient viewers engaged thanks to an interesting story, strong direction and near perfect performances from the cast. It's for this reason that *Strangled* is worth checking out if you can.

Rating: 🧠🧠🧠🧠🧠

SPECIAL FEATURES: It might have just been my disc but the menu system on this presentation is just awful. Lines are obscured and it's hard to see what extras were on offer here making it damn near impossible to view the features beyond the main film. I know there is a trailer on the disc but that was all I could see. It was bitterly disappointing and added even more frustration to my viewing of the film.

Rating: 🧠🧠🧠🧠🧠

STRANGLER is out now on **UK Dual Format** (Blu-ray & DVD) edition courtesy of Eureka Entertainment.

REVIEWED BY JON DICKINSON

BLACK SABBATH

THE FILM: Horror icon Boris Karloff hosts this trio of horrific tales about what lies after death. It's a wicked and entertaining ride filled with ghosts and vampires, as various people are treated to what happens when you steal from a dead lady, hang-up on someone who's deceased and meddle with those who are blood-thirsty. All three stories are brilliant for their equally impressive set designs, practical effects and the cast that bring the tales to life. The main concern is with wanting more after the credits role on the final tale *The Wurdalak*.

Directed by renowned Italian director Mario Bava, *Black Sabbath* is an aged, but extremely entertaining series of horror stories. The first – titled *A Drop of Water* – is remarkably chilling thanks to the lifelike detail on the piercing face of a deceased – but far from immobile – medium, who is believed to have died during a séance. Her staring eyes and twisted grin make for a skin-prickling watch, especially when she makes an appearance at the home of Nurse Helen Chester (Jacqueline Pierreaux) who stole a beautiful ring off her pale finger. It's a tightly woven, simple shocker and is my personal favourite from the bunch. The sound of dripping water will be sure to scare after this one.

The Telephone is the second darkly comic tale of a dead man on the end of a phone, who refuses to let his ex-beloved move on from his death. Believed to be losing her grip on her sanity – dead people can't talk on the phone, come on now – she is laced with tranquillisers by the man's other romantic interest. It's a spooky story of love beyond the grave, which is elevated by the genuine eeriness that comes with the man's twisted on-phone demands.

The third, final and longest story is based on the vampiric tale by Aleksei Tolstoy and sees the effect of vampirism on a man who loves his family. In this tale of the blood-hungry undead, the vampire can only feed on the blood of those he loves. What unravels is



subtly horrific, especially when you see the old man target his young grandson. As with all classic tales of vampires, there's lashings of romance, which can only end in tears – or most likely, bloodshed. The story dwindles in the middle and there are times when you really feel the time ticking by, but Boris Karloff's turn as the red-eyed vampire Gorca will be sure to creep you out.

Black Sabbath is a heap of horrid fun for fans of anthologies and one that, perhaps, you may have missed. It certainly peaks at the beginning, but the stories that follow will be sure to delight and fans of Karloff will, of course, enjoy his intermission oddities.

Rating: 🧠🧠🧠🧠🧠

SPECIAL FEATURES: *Black Sabbath* may only come with 2 special features, but they are great ones. The first is an audio commentary with Tim Lucas as he provides a historical backdrop for the film and details important scenes within each segment. He talks lavishly about lighting and sound, describing intricate moments you may have missed to enhance your viewing of *Black Sabbath*. Additionally, *Twice the Fear* is a great look at the difference between the Italian and American cuts of the film, showing small changes that make one hell of a difference. From changes in audio, dialogue and the ordering of the stories, you'll be surprised to learn just how much differs between the two versions.

Rating: 🧠🧠🧠🧠🧠

BLACK SABBATH is out now on **UK Blu-ray** edition courtesy of Arrow Video.

REVIEWED BY JESSY WILLIAMS

THE CAT O' NINE TAILS

THE FILM: *The Cat O' Nine Tails* is one of Dario Argento's less favoured works and if you were to watch it now for the first time, you'd easily understand why. The film flies well below the bar when compared to features like *Suspiria*, *Deep Red* and *Phenomena*. It is an over-long and predictable affair that fails to grab its audience's attention, despite a few moments of amusing strangeness.

This giallo follows a blind ex-journalist (Karl Malden) and reporter (James Franciscus) as they seek to uncover the reason for a series of murders connected to a pharmaceutical company. They soon find themselves on the killer's radar as they uncover the scientists' discovery of an XXYY gene, which supposedly leaves you prone to violent – and probably murderous – tendencies. What ensues is sometimes entertaining; there are moments that can only be described as bizarre – one scene follows a romantic encounter with reporter Carlo and a woman named Anna (Catherine Spaak) where the

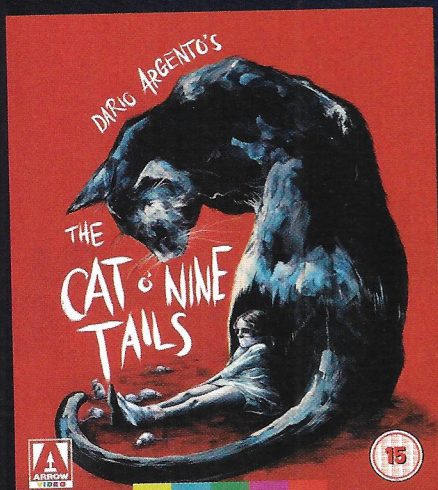
threat of poisoned milk looms far stronger than it should. Another sees poor Carlo trapped in a tomb after he and Franco decide to undergo a bit of grave digging; in the dead of night, of course. These oddly humorous moments are the film's strongest, but the majority of *The Cat O'Nine Tails*' 112-minute runtime is filled with tedium and scenes of style, rather than substance.

As with all Argento's features, you can't deny that *The Cat O'Nine Tails* is a beautiful film to look at. This is only the director's second feature after *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*, but you can see that his love and flair for luscious sets and colour arose early. The visuals are pleasing and help to add to the film's alluring edge. As with most giallos and Argento features, there is a preoccupation with seduction which runs like a thread through the centre of this cat's beating heart. Death and romance are interwoven to add to this film's layered tale concerned with nature vs. nurture, but it still remains to be difficult to fall in love with this flawed story of mystery, murder and suspense.

The Cat O'Nine Tails is impossible to adore, but easy to enjoy for its fleeting moments of greatness. The blood runs thick and deaths are deliciously gruesome, but there's something uneven about the film's inability to straddle both seriousness and comedy. It's an average feature, but an Argento one no less.

Rating: 🐼🐼🐼🐼🐼

SPECIAL FEATURES: The special features are a brilliant array of extras that feature a trio of interviews with Dario Argento, Dardano Sacchiatti and Cinzia De Carolis. They are all detailed, recent chats from 2017 and, of course, the Argento one is a must. He describes his location for the film and why he thinks it's not one of his best, plus the film's connection to *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*. The original ending for the film is another necessary part of these features and although it doesn't feature any footage (that's been lost unfortunately) it does detail

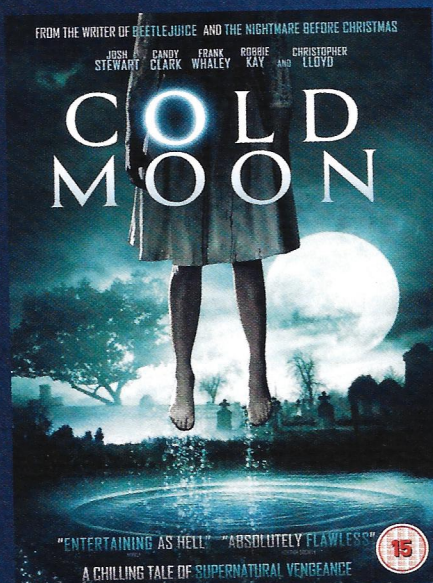


the original ending with images of the script; for the first time in English, too. It's a great selection of lengthy special features that is sure to please fans of *The Cat O'Nine Tails* and intrigue those that may be stumbling on it for the first time.

Rating: 🐼🐼🐼🐼🐼

THE CAT O' NINE TAILS is out now on **UK Limited Edition Blu-ray** courtesy of **Arrow Video**.

REVIEWED BY JESSY WILLIAMS



COLD MOON

THE FILM: A small town and a family's life is rocked when their teenage daughter is murdered by a mysterious assailant. However, thanks to a dream, her grandmother knows who did it even though she can't prove it. The killer, meanwhile, is haunted by the ghost of his victim -- or maybe it's all happening in his own mind.

Based on Michael McDowell's 1980 novel *Cold Moon in Babylon*, Griff Furst's latest feature doesn't rank alongside *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and *Beetlejuice* as a memorable adaption of the author's work. That said, it is a moderately serviceable effort which toes the line between the supernatural and psychological, enhanced ever-so-slightly by its downbeat, southern gothic-tinged portrayal of a town that seems forgotten by neighbouring civilisation.

That said, *Cold Moon* is essentially the poster child for a film that's "just fine." Furst's direction is competent, but nothing pops out that's worthy of excitement. The performances venture between believable and bland and it's difficult to invest in any of the characters as a result. The only thing worth writing home about the score, which imbues the film with some lively, southern spirit occasionally.

If you've seen Sam Raimi's *The Gift* or Simon Rumley's *Johnny Frank Garrett's Last Word* then you're familiar with this type of

scare fare. Those movies do it much better and *Cold Moon* doesn't strive to carve its own niche in the spectrum of movies of that ilk. But even though the film doesn't amount to anything more than a pedestrian effort, it's worth picking up if you're seeking an undemanding time-passer when there's a chill in the air and the night is dark. It follows every rule in the book in a bid to cater to the audience it's been designed to target, but you could do a lot worse.

Rating: 🐼🐼🐼🐼🐼

SPECIAL FEATURES: Unless your idea of riveting extras is a scene selection, you won't find anything here.

Rating: 🐼🐼🐼🐼🐼

COLD MOON is out now on **UK DVD** courtesy of **Bulldog Films**

REVIEWED BY KIERAN FISHER

PHENOMENA

THE FILM: While many consider the likes of *Suspiria* and *Deep Red* to be his masterworks, *Phenomena* is arguably the most entertaining of the classics the Italian maverick Dario Argento released during his prime. Horror tales featuring vicious murderers and outcasts with psychic powers are synonymous with the genre, sure, but as far as I'm aware *Phenomena* is the only one that mashes these elements with the inclusion of a chimpanzee wielding a surgical scalpel. It's the little things like that which make *Phenomena* such a delight, and it's about time that it received the Arrow treatment.

The film stars a young Jennifer Connelly as an unpopular student at an all-girls boarding school who has the ability to communicate with insects. When it's discovered that she can use her abilities to help track a serial killer who's on the loose and dismembering her classmates, she teams up with a professor (played by Donald Pleasence) and his chimp assistant to get to the bottom of the string of brutal murders.

Phenomena contains several of the director's trademarks: the detective mystery, supernatural elements, a fascination with insects, a hypnotic atmosphere and a rocking soundtrack featuring frequent collaborators Goblin and even some Iron Maiden. At the centre is a demented fairy tale-esque story, and the film's over-the-top climax is a gore hound's dream. The film combines fantastical beauty with downright savagery to create something of a unique marvel that begs to be seen. Whether you love or hate Argento's work, it tends to be fascinating nonetheless, and while *Phenomena* has proven to be somewhat throughout the years, there's no denying its originality.

Rating: 🐼🐼🐼🐼🐼