

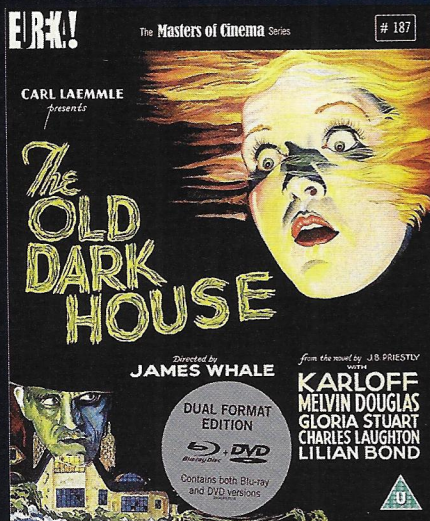
is an example of the unhinged family that reside in this old, dark house. She rants about her wild, wicked and deceased 21-year old sister, warns of women sinners and red lipstick as she describes how her sister died horrifically in the very bedroom they're currently in. As candlelight flickers all around and the storm rages relentlessly outside, it's an effortlessly eerie scene that only touches upon the level of madness that is to follow.

Boris Karloff is again an imposing presence, not needing to change much from his role as Frankenstein's monster to portray the role of Morgan the Butler. Described as dumb, he is a misunderstood giant that finds himself in trouble – he likes a drink, for one – but you never get the impression he's truly trying to hurt anyone, but instead, trying to protect what resides upstairs. He's at the centre of the film's madder moments, but *THE OLD DARK HOUSE* is certainly a simply insane story at its core.

It's a short and sweet 70 minutes that slow escalates into controlled insanity, where venturing upstairs proves to be a mistake. Madness and fright come to blows when childish laughter is heard from the floor above. They say that curiosity killed the cat and these characters would certainly have had a more pleasant stay if they'd refrained from investigating. Although the film's peak doesn't come until the final 10-15 minutes, it is well worth the wait thanks to the consistent drips of horror that we have been treated to. Once the characters begin to separate, you know something terrible is going to happen.

Rating: 🧟🧟🧟🧟

SPECIAL FEATURES: There is plenty to whet the appetites of those that have been long-term fans of *THE OLD DARK HOUSE* or those that are discovering it for the first time. The interview with Sarah Karloff – daughter of Boris Karloff – is a favourite of mine as I love delving into the



success of the iconic Boris Karloff and the huge amount of films he starred in – close to 170. There are also some fascinating audio commentaries with Kim Newman and Stephen Jones, as well as Gloria Stuart and James Curtis. All in all, excellent special features for a film that has been sadly overlooked, until now.

Rating: 🧟🧟🧟🧟

THE OLD DARK HOUSE [Masters of Cinema] is out now on **Dual Format** (Blu-ray & DVD) courtesy of Eureka Entertainment.

REVIEWED BY JESSY WILLIAMS

TWO THOUSAND MANIACS!

THE FILM: Long before Robert Englund and Lin Shaye rocked it as killer hillbillies in 2001 *MANIACS*, Herschell Gordon Lewis shocked audiences with his OG tale about revenge, *TWO THOUSAND MANIACS!* Although it is far from impactful as it was when it was first released, this grindhouse classic really is every bit as savage as the violence it portrays.

The film follows six people who are lured into a small town in the middle of nowhere and find themselves the reluctant guests of honour for their confederate centennial celebration. Slowly, the tourists go missing one by one until it is revealed that they have been savagely murdered by the townsfolk leaving the last men standing fighting to escape their nightmare unharmed.

Insane and unhinged, *TWO THOUSAND MANIACS!* is quite the eye opener from *BLOOD FEAST*'s Herschell Gordon Lewis who notably has stepped up his game for this one. But don't go expecting a masterpiece as this one is not only plagued by awful performances from the cast and more than a few nonsensical moments, instead you should sit back and strap yourselves in for a very raw horror experience that constantly tests your taste level and will leave yourself at the end of its 83 minute runtime feeling completely dumbfounded.

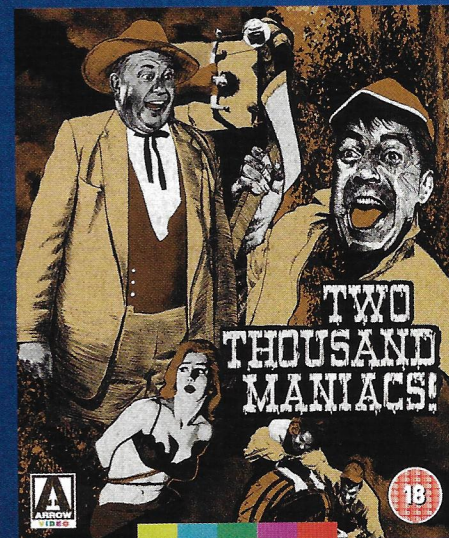
Forming our group of victims on this misadventure are John and Bea Miller, and David and Beverley Wells, two married couples at different stages in their relationships. Rounding up the list of victims are Tom White and Terry Adams whose relationship is unruly volatile. As a group, each pairing does their best with what they're given but none of them makes as much impact as Jeffrey Allen. As mayor of the town, Allen is not only charming but disturbingly so at the same time. Literally, everything he does in this film made my skin crawl.

So whilst we watch the visitors meet their maker one by one in fairly gruesome means

(the rock fall is my particular favourite) the remainder of the townspeople keep the films over the top mentality alive by being as loud and as obnoxious as they can be (Gary Bakeman's Rufe and Ben Moore's Lester embody every bit of the typical hillbilly stereotype). So in a film where the focus is placed more on shock value than investment in its characters it doesn't really matter that the cast is awful at what they do.

I can imagine that at the time of its release, *TWO THOUSAND MANIACS!* would have shocked audiences to their core but it will fail to make impact on today's audiences especially considering how uneven the film is overall. So unless you want to see what the fuss is about this might be one film that you shouldn't rush to check out any time soon.

Rating: 🧟🧟🧟🧟



SPECIAL FEATURES: As with any decent release from Arrow Films, this presentation of the Herschell Gordon Lewis shocker comes complete with a bonus feature which in this case is 1964's *MOONSHINE MOUNTAIN*. Also included in this presentation fans can look forward to a video introduction from the director himself, archive audio commentary and an in-depth interview too. Other features include a visual essay on the depiction of the American South in exploitation cinema and so much more including outtakes, trailers and a video tribute to legendary producer David F. Friedman.

So where the film may leave a lot to desire, the extras included in this disc do not. If the subject matter is something that you are interested in then this detailed insight into the making of the film, crowd reaction to it and the effect it had on cinema moving forward upon its release then it is worth the price of the disc itself.

Rating: 🧟🧟🧟🧟

TWO THOUSAND MANIACS! is out now on **UK Blu-ray** courtesy of Arrow Video.

REVIEWED BY JON DICKINSON