

REISSUES

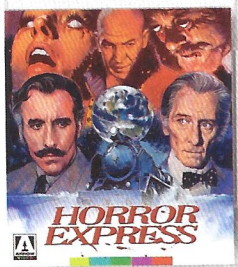


OUT OF THE DEEP FREEZE

HORROR EXPRESS (1972) Blu-ray

Starring Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing and Alberto de Mendoza
Directed by Eugenio Martín
Written by Arnaud d'Usseau and Julian Zimet
Arrow Video

As any commuter will tell you, trains can be hell – never more so than in this brisk '70s flick that gleefully combines horror and sci-fi. The year is 1906 and famed anthropologist Professor

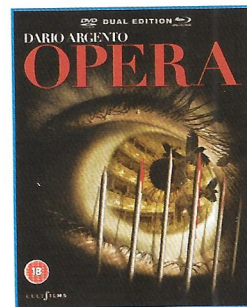


Saxton (a wonderfully imperious Christopher Lee) is transporting the frozen corpse of a mysterious hominid via the Trans-Siberian Express. He's joined by the wry Dr. Wells (Peter Cushing, no stranger to sharing a doomed train with Lee), a glamorous countess

(Silvia Tortosa), and louche, vodka-swilling Cossack Telly Savalas. As anyone who's seen *Encino Man* knows, you can't trust a frozen monkeyman to stay that way, and it's not long before our frosty friend is leaving a string of milky-eyed corpses in his wake. Along the way, there's a jewel theft, some questionable science, a zombie pile-on and a mad monk (Alberto de Men-

doza, equal parts Rasputin and Charles Manson) who renounces his faith in the name of Satan.

The opulent period backdrop, matter-of-fact gore and tight (if occasionally outré) plotting make for a weird, wild ride with hints of *Quatermass* and *Who Goes There?* As with all Arrow reissues, this one has been carefully excised from deepfreeze – it looks fabulously crisp, and the bevy of extras includes chats with director Eugenio Martín, producer Bernard Gordon and composer John Cacavas. Recommended.



ALEX DELLER

PRIMA TRAUMA

OPERA (1987) Blu-ray

Starring Cristina Marsillach, Ian Charleson and Urbano Barberini
Directed by Dario Argento
Written by Dario Argento and Franco Ferrini
CultFilms

Many Dario Argento fans consider *Opera* to be the Italian maestro's last great screen work, and I'll go one further to say it's my personal favourite of his filmography. All of his chief obsessions – from the symbiosis between artistic impulse and murderous compulsion to the use of animals

in key roles – are present and accounted for, coupled with some of his most viscerally detailed violence and stunning camerawork. Never given proper big-screen exposure in North America, it's now available on Blu-ray from CultFilms in a lavish 2K restoration.

Meta-referencing his own ill-fated attempt to stage a production of Giuseppe Verdi's *Rigoletto*, Argento takes us into an opera house where filmmaker Marco (Ian Charleson) is directing an avant-garde version of Verdi's *Macbeth*. After its diva lead has an accident, young understudy Betty (Cristina Marsillach) finds herself the star, and if that isn't intimidating enough, a black-gloved stalker begins killing other members of the troupe, tying Betty up and taping needles to her lower eyelid so she's forced to watch. This dreadful bit of detail adds extra squirminess to the bloody intrigue that also involves Betty's agent (Daria Nicolodi) and a detective (Urbano Barberini, who had just starred in Franco Zeffirelli's Verdi-opera film *Otello*).

CultFilms' rich 2.35:1 transfer does justice to the movie's vibrant colours and lush settings, backed by English and subtitled Italian-language soundtracks. The latter is preferable, sounding more natural and capturing nuances the other track misses, as when someone gives Betty that contradictory bit of showbiz best wishes, "break a leg." Extras include a before-and-after restoration segment and a new 40-minute chat with Argento; though he covers numerous subjects familiar from other interviews, there's plenty of good stuff here, from wistful recollections of past collaborators to his contentious on-set relationship with Marsillach to a shouting match with censors, during which Argento was led away by police.

And when you check out the disc's 45 minutes of fascinating behind-the-scenes footage and witness the bound and gagged Marsillach (with needles in place) being man-handled by the director to get the right reactions out of her, you can

understand if she became a little testy on set. A welcome encore.

MICHAEL GINGOLD

BLOOD IS BLIND

VALENTINE: COLLECTOR'S EDITION (2001) Blu-ray

Starring Marley Shelton, Denise Richards and David Boreanaz
Directed by Jamie Blanks
Written by Donna Powers, Wayne Powers, Gretchen J. Berg and Aaron Harberts
Scream Factory

Your heart may (or may not) melt with the news that Scream Factory has packaged a valentine to fans of late '90s horror fare with a deluxe edition of *Valentine* in an attempt to resell