

a movie that critics stabbed and slashed harder than the actual murderer in the 2001 flick. The plot hinges on some nifty Valentine's Day cards (that *Rue Morgue* should replicate and sell) being sent as revenge to a group of twentysomething girlfriends, best buds since grade six (Marley Shelton, Jessica Capshaw, Denise Richards, Katherine Heigl, etc.).

Cue a cherub-masked killer for 90 minutes of stalking and slashing, with a solid final girl in *Grindhouse*'s Marley Shelton. Though light on substance, *Valentine* possesses more entertainment value than the current rating of 9% on Rotten Tomatoes would suggest. As with *Urban Legend*, director Jamie Blanks lenses this with a sense of style and energy that makes you wish his career extended beyond this sort of fare — scenes are moodily lit, space is used cleverly on- and offscreen, and the goofy jokes land well.

Editions like these need to sell themselves on the extras, and to Scream Factory's credit, *Valentine* does come packed with scores of new interviews. There's a lot of retro representation here, from Richards to Shelton to composer Don Davis. Most are truly substantial, such as the one hour (!) featurette on writing the film from screenwriters Gretchen J. Berg and Aaron Harberts, who address different takes on the script and its flawed male characters; or the half hour with editor Steve Mirkovich. Cram in two hours of raw, behind-the-scenes footage, and unless you're a *Valentine* megafan, it's almost too much; ideally, this would work better if edited into one longer, seamless feature (as Scream Factory did with their recent *Urban Legend* collector's edition).

Also worthwhile is a new commentary with director Blanks and long-time friend Don (*Phantasm*) Coscarelli, who humorously point out what jerks the men in the movie are, and that the strong female characters actually lend the film a more progressive tone; it helps that there's an easygoing back-and-forth vibe between these two that translates into a good listen for a film that could use the helping hand.



JEFF SZPIRGAS



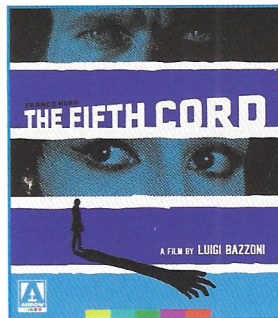
Valentine

NON-GENERIC GIALLO

THE FIFTH CORD (1971) Blu-ray

Starring Franco Nero, Silvia Monti and Rossella Falk
Directed by Luigi Bazzoni
Written by Mario di Nardo, Mario Fanelli and Luigi Bazzoni
Arrow Video

Holding a special (if obscure) place in the hearts of giallo fans, *The Fifth Cord* offers Franco Nero as Andrea Bild, an alcoholic has-been reporter who winds up in the centre of a serial killer investigation among a tightly interwoven community of complex characters. What the film lacks in the usual tropes of the subgenre, it more than makes up for with its production style and the merits of an all-star Italian cast and crew. Arrow's Blu-ray reissue presents the 2K restoration picture with original lossless mono Italian and English soundtracks and a black glove full of perks, including a new audio commentary track by critic Travis Crawford; a video essay by critic Rachael Nisbet; interviews with Nero, editor Eugenio Alabiso, and critic Michael Mackenzie; a restored deleted sequence; image



gallery; and essays by critics Kat Ellinger and Peter Jilmstad.

In terms of entertainment value, the Nero and Alabiso interviews are the most charming extras, with both interviewees providing touching anecdotes about working with their collaborators both on this film and beyond. Crawford's commentary, the Nisbet essay, and the Mackenzie interview will likely appeal only to scholarly *giallo* fans and filmmakers, but an interesting overlapping observation made by all three is that *The Fifth Cord* is possibly the best Argento-esque *giallo* film that was not made by director Dario Argento.

Also included is an abstract deleted montage of the film's murder suspects and potential victims with a haunting bit of music from illustrious composer Ennio Morricone. Ellinger's essay further addresses the film's theme of modernity as an alienating concept, while Jilmstad's essay explores the fact that *The Fifth Cord* was one of the rare examples of a *giallo* film being based on an existing literary work (by D.M. Devine) in that same tradition. All in all, it's a comprehensive package for a deceptively complex genre film.

SCOTT FEINBLATT

