

HORROR REVIEWS



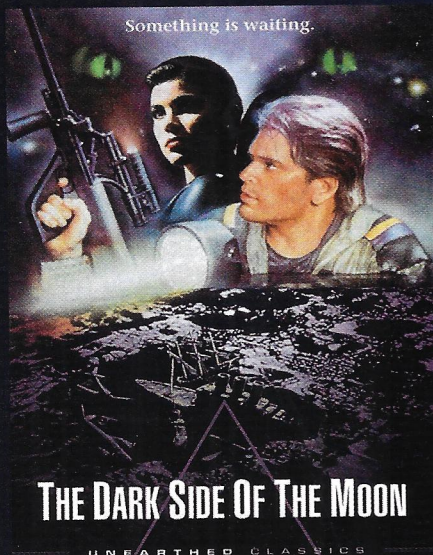
WHAT'S HOT IN THE WORLD OF DVD, BLU-RAY, STREAMING AND DOWNLOAD

THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON

THE FILM: The Dark Side of the Moon is a long-forgotten sci-fi horror film from the mind of Carey and Chad Hayes. Directed by D.J. Webster, the film is a muted chiller whose story is led not by blinding special effects but a slowly building sense of dread. Although it is entirely amateur in nature, there is something notable to say about the performances of this film and the hard work that Webster's crew puts into the film to create a suffocating sense of claustrophobia.

The film follows a repair crew who have been sent into space to repair an orbital weapon. Unfortunately for them, something happens to their ship and the team are left stranded. With all hope lost, the team discover a seemingly abandoned space shuttle and attempt to board it. However, that's when the true nightmare begins when they find themselves coming face to face with terrifying evil.

Without giving too much away D.J. Webster has made good use of a limited budget to craft a tense thriller. Inspiring solid performances from his cast, Webster takes his audience on a ride that starts off slow giving audiences a chance to familiarise themselves with characters before unleashing a literal hell. So, as the



crew is picked off one by one, fingers are pointed and Webster continues to amp up the tension with several interesting set pieces.

As a whole, The Dark Side of the Moon may not be entirely successful in its aim to deliver a taught sci-fi cult thriller but there's no denying its potential. Its serious tone work well within the film but it also helps rein in any muffled or unintentional laughs from the audience. Sure, audiences will be quick to make comparisons with Alien but those willing to invest their time will soon discover it's something entirely different in nature.

Rating: 🧠🧠🧠🧠

SPECIAL FEATURES: Included with this presentation from Unearthed Films, fans of the film can look forward to watching a handful of extras. Although amateur in nature, these extras are fun to watch but don't really add anything noteworthy.

There are three Skype interviews with actor Alan Blumenfeld, make-up effects artist R. Christopher Biggs and stuntman Chuck Borden. During his interview, Blumenfeld chats openly about his involvement with the film, the development around building his character's backstory prior to filming, what it was like on set and about his unexpected performance of the film. Meanwhile, Biggs discusses his previous work on Critters and A Nightmare On Elm Street 5 before joining The Dark Side of the Moon. Although this is a basic Q&A the information on hand is very detailed and fascinating to watch if you have an appreciation for make-up effects.

Rounding up the extras on this disc is a photo gallery, a budget breakdown, a trailer for the film and other Unearthed Films releases.

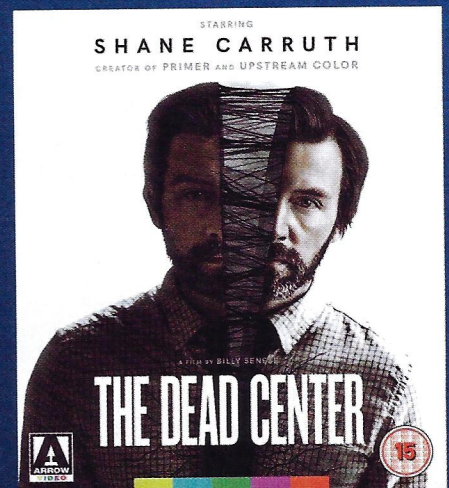
Rating: 🧠🧠🧠🧠

THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON is out now on **US DVD, Blu-ray** and **Amazon Prime Video** courtesy of Unearthed Films.

REVIEWED BY JON DICKINSON

THE DEAD CENTER

THE FILM: Billy Senese's thrilling horror-mystery The Dead Center is a tale of two parts. On one side, we have a medical examiner investigating the disappearance of a corpse and on the other, we have a psychiatrist examining a mysterious patient who appears to have arrived from nowhere. They're both in the same hospital, but unaware that both their mysteries can be tied up with the same alarming ribbon.



The Dead Center plays out like the twisted, beautiful baby of The Autopsy of Jane Doe and One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. Surrounding its thoughtful commentary on mental health is a generous helping of creepy scares, honestly, this one gave me chills. As the mysterious John Doe, Jeremy Childs is criminally eerie. He describes being possessed, having been brought back to life more than once and bringing whatever he has inside him back every time. Tense, still shots on his face allow his unfocused eyes to be entries to the shakings of his soul. Something weird is going on inside of him and it is this mysterious uncertainty that will hold your attention during this film's perfect 90-minute runtime.

Add this to The Dead Center's fierce, unnerving soundtrack and the mind-bending, dizzying imagery that flashes on-screen like a true nightmare. The film's inspirations can be further stretched to

J-Horror, where its scares are built from an atmosphere of ever-increasing dread and deaths that could have been ripped straight from *Ringu*. It'll be a straight-up chiller for those that prefer psychological, creeping terror over gore and jump scares, so add this to your lists if that sounds like your kind of horror.

As a comment on mental health, *The Dead Center* keeps itself grounded and never teeters onto the side of melodrama or exploitation. Its exploration is organic, natural and moulds easily into the film's supernatural side, neatly balancing the horrors of reality with one that is far more mystical. We get brief insights into the minds and lives of those in the psychiatric unit, but it is the fracturing sanity of Shane Carruth's Dr Forrester that is most interesting.

Dr Forrester is struggling with his own demons; a childhood trauma that has undoubtedly shaken him more than he lets on. Although the friction between him and colleague Dr Grey (Poorna Jagannathan) is not entirely fleshed out, it adds an intriguing layer to his personality and one that mostly satisfies why he's so intent on solving the mystery of Mr Doe. As he becomes increasingly caught up in the madness, his sanity takes a whacking and Carruth wonderfully portrays a man teetering on the edge of rationality.

The Dead Center is a creative and thematic masterclass, a horror that grips you like a vice and lingers long after it's over. All horror-loving eyes should be on director Billy Senese. I, for one, can't wait to see what terrifying treat he unleashes next.

Rating: 🧠🧠🧠🧠🧠

SPECIAL FEATURES: The special features on this Arrow Video edition are a brilliant addition. They include an intriguing set of deleted/extended scenes and an alternate ending that could rival the one we officially get. On-set interviews and a commentary with writer-director Bill Senese are enlightening and interesting; it's always great to hear how a film comes together. It is also a nice touch to include the original, eerie short *The Suicide Tapes*, which was the inspiration behind *The Dead Center*. If you loved the film, you'll definitely love these special features.

Rating: 🧠🧠🧠🧠🧠

THE DEAD CENTER is out now on **UK DVD, Blu-ray and Amazon Prime Video** courtesy of Arrow Video.

REVIEWED BY JESSY WILLIAMS

THE DARK HALF

THE FILM: In George A. Romero's adaptation of Stephen King's *The Dark Half*, author Thad Beaumont is mentally terrorised when his pen name alter-ego George Stark comes to very scary life. Played by Timothy Hutton, Stark goes on a murderous rampage when he is figuratively slain by Thad, who is also played by Hutton.

Under the name Stark, Beaumont is able to write hardened crime fiction starring Alexis Machine, which has proven to be his most successful works of fiction. However, Stark is literally Thad's dark half; he drives a black Oldsmobile Toronado, smokes cigarettes, drinks heavily and has an attitude that does not take kindly to being murdered.



Spawned from the mind of Stephen King, who has written under the guise of Richard Bachman, it's safe to say that *The Dark Half* was birthed by King's own experiences of writing under a pen name. But, obviously/hopefully to an extreme. The film explores the struggles of creativity and the impact that can have on one's sense of identity. If we write under a different name are we as responsible for what is written? Is that the reason we want to do it? Thad hides behind the guise of Stark, because he's embarrassed of what he writes and feels it is not worthy of being associated with his real name.

It's an intriguing concept and *The Dark Half* touches upon it well, if it is a little lacklustre. At close to 2 hours long, it does edge closely to over-staying its welcome as the most exciting part of the film is Hutton's performance in both roles. His stuck-on eyebrows are a must-see and he, undoubtedly, gives his all to his dark half and his lighter side. However, I did find myself checking the time and eager to see the inevitable face-off between Stark and Beaumont. (It's almost worth the wait).

With such an iconic director at the helm, it's no wonder that *The Dark Half* almost goes forgotten when thinking of Romero's filmography. Romero also worked with Stephen King on the excellent *Creepshow*, so this isn't even their best collaboration. There are some creative flairs within the film that help to heighten the eerie atmosphere; the onslaught of sparrows is easily comparable to Hitchcock's own avian nightmare and there is a lot to praise with the film's gruesome kills. Practical effects will always get a thumbs-up from me and Stark's gruesome deterioration is extremely, wonderfully icky.

The Dark Half is a solid slasher-thriller that soars thanks to Timothy Hutton's energetic, Jekyll and Hyde performance, but it is without the lasting terror that would elevate it above other King adaptations or George A. Romero features.

Rating: 🧠🧠🧠🧠🧠

SPECIAL FEATURES: There's an epic audio commentary with George A. Romero and a *Making Of*, where Romero discusses the lack of real birds in the movie. He's such a gem, it's always a joy to listen to anything he says and it's no different here. There is also a mini documentary which originally aired in 1987 called *The Incredibly Strange Film Show* (before my time, sorry everyone!), which follows Jonathan Ross exploring the importance and cultural impact of George A. Romero's ground-breaking *The Night of the Living Dead*. Mediocre film, excellent special features.

Rating: 🧠🧠🧠🧠🧠

THE DARK HALF is out now on **UK Dual Format edition DVD and Blu-ray** courtesy of Eureka Films.

REVIEWED BY JESSY WILLIAMS

AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON

THE FILM: Werewolves have become harder and harder to come by in recent years, which is why for the majority of horror fans John Landis' 1981 film *An American Werewolf in London* is a classic that deserves preservation throughout the years. Which is exactly what Arrow Video have done with their recent 4k restoration and limited edition release that has been designed with furry fans in mind. Even after years of advancements in special effects and cinematography, this exceptional monster movie still stands the test of time, and now we're lucky enough to see those horrific transformations in even more graphically gory detail.