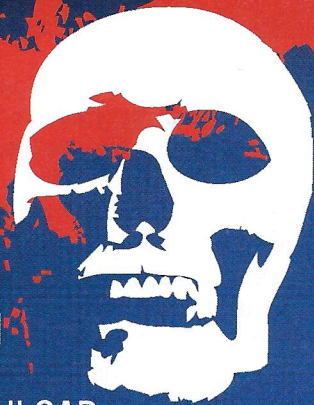


HORROR REVIEWS



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

HITCHHIKE TO HELL

THE FILM: "You don't want to upset me, do you?" Howard's mama asks when he poses the ridiculous idea of going to a bar after work. "It's dangerous out there." She adds. It's actually dangerous for everyone except Howard, because he's behind the murders his mama is reading about in the newspaper.

Hitchhike to Hell tells a familiar filmic tale as it follows a disturbed van driver who picks up lonely hitchhikers and kills them. His kills are targeted at those who are running away from home and aren't limited to only the pretty young girls alone on the road. His desire is to punish those that are hurting their parents stems from his own mother's pain after his sister left home years before.

"I hope she's biting her fingernails every night" one of his victims admits when questioned about how her mother must be feeling after her daughter has run away. Uh oh. Cue a twisted soundtrack that mirrors Howard's deranged psyche and a brutal murder that ends in rape and strangulation by coat hanger. Howard works at a dry cleaners, so has plenty of those lying round in his van which, surprisingly, does not contribute to his eventual capture.

The police are a bit rubbish in this one and despite their determination to capture whoever is carrying out these heinous crimes, they do very little to investigate. It's also funny how no-one notices Howard and his big red van picking up anyone, because he's not exactly inconspicuous. He describes how his mind wanders, speaks of forgetfulness and starts to suffer from debilitating headaches. Howard in many ways is a typical killer; his lust for murder being born from psychological torment, blame and an unhealthy relationship with his mother. He's no one we've not seen before but as Howard, Robert Gribbin does well to convey the quiet type whose going through a major crisis of identity.

Luckily for this film it manages to



side-step an idea of victim-blaming, by attributing the cause of the murders to Howard's deep-rooted psychological issues and his over-protective mother. She tells him that his sister Judy would have "Had it coming" if she were to be murdered, which in turn, allows Howard to excuse his kills: they had it coming, right? It doesn't match Friday the 13th or Psychos' concept of mothers and murder, but it does manage to be more than just another by-the-numbers slasher that was so prevalent in the '80s. Just about.

The kills aren't particularly gratuitous and it certainly isn't as gory as other slasher flicks. But the deaths are eerie enough, especially when an 11-year old is targeted. It's a short and watchable endeavour that sits below 90-minutes, so doesn't quite outstay its welcome. It does feel rather flat and constrained by a rigid structure; a scene in a police station will follow a murder scene that is then followed by a scene in Howard's home where he talks to his mother, etcetera. It's a predictable, but pleasing enough killer flick that'll entertain while you're watching, but you'll probably forget about it soon enough.

Rating: 🧟🧟🧟🧟🧟

SPECIAL FEATURES: The extras on this Arrow release are very decent, but the question is: do you really want to know

more about Hitchhike to Hell? The Of Monsters and Morality feature will take you through director Ivan Berwick's short life behind the camera and a video essay from Alexandra Heller-Nicholas works as an interesting exploration of the dark side of hitchhiking on-screen. They're great, lengthy extras, but if you're looking for more, you can also enjoy the original theatrical trailer and a feature on singer Nancy Adams. Plus, even more!

Rating: 🧟🧟🧟🧟🧟

HITCHHIKE TO HELL is out now on UK Blu-ray and Amazon Prime Video courtesy of Arrow Video.

REVIEWED BY JESSY WILLIAMS

ANNABELLE COMES HOME

THE FILM: In this third entry of the Annabelle franchise and the seventh film in the Conjuring universe (don't forget about The Curse of La Llorona!), the terrifying Annabelle doll is taken to where it belongs: a locked and bolted room in Ed and Lorraine Warrens' home. Although, when you think about it, it's probably not for the best that a conduit like Annabelle, who has been described as a beacon for demons and ghosts, is surrounded by haunted and cursed objects. Alas, we'd not have a story if she was alone, locked

