



Misery of a different sort awaits us in Arrow Films' [Girls Nite Out](#), which is a movie I'd never even heard of before Arrow put it on their 2022 schedule. (It was also released as *The Scaremaker*, which made me think of the *Wishmaster* movies; amazingly, this barely measures up to that bargain-basement horror series.)

Imagine a movie that tries to mash up *Black Christmas* and *Animal House* because, well, both of those made a lot of money and the filmmakers had access to a college campus. Not that a horror-comedy isn't possible, or that a horror-comedy set on a college campus couldn't work; the *Happy Death Day* movies are right there, after all. *Girls Nite Out* quite simply has no idea what

it's doing, slapping together a perfunctory plot following some sexy young things through such time-honored activities as a football game, a party and a scavenger hunt while being picked off by a bloodthirsty killer who's stolen the suit of the team's mascot – a giant teddy bear – and equipped it with knives for claws.

And as if the mounting body count wasn't bad enough, local cop Hal Holbrook – fresh from another Romero joint, as it happens! – also has to field taunting phone calls from someone who claims to be Dickie Cavanaugh, and is bragging about the murders. Only thing is, Dickie Cavanaugh – an infamous local psychiatric patient – is dead. Isn't he? (Poor Holbrook. Making *Creepshow* was probably a lot easier.)

*Arrow's Girls Nite Out* Blu-ray is a curious prospect: People who love this movie will be delighted by the depth and breadth of the special features, but how many fans does this thing have?

The feature is presented in a new 2K restoration assembled from a selection of 35mm release prints, with some standard-definition footage spliced in to cover missing material; it's all been digitally graded and restored to the best possible presentation, but it still looks like a low-budget exploitation picture that's been knocked around for forty years.

This is not necessarily a strike against the experience of watching *Girls Nite Out*: Edgar Wright once pointed out the VHS-quality director's cut of *Forbidden World* included with that film's Shout Factory Blu-ray was probably the best way to see a movie like that – returning it to its video-store origins – and there's something similarly appealing about this transfer, and its implication that the movie we're watching wouldn't really benefit from a deep cleaning. *Black Christmas* never really looked pristine either, come to think of it.

Extras include an enthusiastic audio commentary with podcaster Justin Kerswell (*The Hysteria Continues*) and author Amanda Reyes, who are both *GNO* superfans. and longish interviews with most of the surviving cast, including married co-stars Lauren-Marie Taylor and John Didrichsen– though

Rutanya Alda, who also starred in *Amityville II: The Possession* in the early '80s and was briefly positioned as a scream queen – is absent. Everyone seems very happy to be talking about this thing they did when they were kids, and I'm glad they get to relive the experience. There's also an archival interview with co-star Julia Montgomery that was apparently produced for a 2005 DVD release that I also managed to miss. So weird.

*Manchester Morgue* is much less of an unknown, since it's spent the last couple of decades bouncing around various catalogues; I've owned the Anchor Bay DVD and the Blue Underground Blu-ray, and was wondering whether Synapse's edition could possibly have anything new to offer. Incidentally, this is not *exactly* a new title; if you grabbed Synapse's limited-edition steelbook back in 2020, this is the same disc, in an ordinary plastic case. But if you missed out, here's another chance to grab a very worthy release.

In addition to the excellent 2020 restoration – mastered in 4K, although Synapse has no plans to release it in UHD – there's a fresh suite of supplements, including two worthwhile audio commentaries: Nathaniel Thompson and Bruce Holecheck focus on the film's place in European horror, while Troy Howarth canonizes the film as a key work of eco-horror at a point when the subgenre was still figuring itself out.

The feature-length documentary *Jorge Grau: Catalonia's Cult Film King* delivers exactly what it says on the tin, built around recent interviews with Grau, makeup effects artist Giannetto De Rossi and composer Giuliano Sorgini and a selection of critics and experts discussing Grau's work and life. It's nothing if not comprehensive, though I do miss the livelier Grau we saw in the Blue Underground's 2008 location tour, *Back to the Morgue*. (None of the supplements produced for previous editions have made it over to Synapse's release.)

De Rossi, who died last spring, gets the spotlight in two other featurettes produced during his 2020 visit to Manchester's Festival of Fantastic Films: There's a lengthy onstage Q&A that finds him in chipper, almost

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enthusiastically pissy form, and a fifteen-minute interview with Eugenio Ercolani that's a little more subdued.

See, that's the sort of nerdy deep dive I was talking about above. If you don't remember it, that's probably an indication that this newsletter is way too long. I'll think about it.

*Next week: I've been meaning to write something about Star Trek: Strange New Worlds, and I'm finally gonna. Also I'm really hoping Kino Lorber sends me that 4K edition of Out of Sight.*

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