



The Phantom of the Movies'

NEW RELEASE SHELF

New release titles are followed by year, Phantom rating, director, lead actors, running time (with titles released in separate editions, the running time refers to the Unrated version), DVD and/or Blu-ray label and release date (month and year).

RATINGS KEY

⌘⌘⌘⌘

Couldn't be better

⌘⌘⌘1/2

Excellent

⌘⌘⌘

Good

⌘⌘1/2

Not bad; worth watching

⌘⌘

Mediocre, worthwhile for a particular thesp, director or genre

⌘1/2

Poor but may have points of interest

⌘

Just plain bad

1/2⌘

Even worse than that

⌘⌘

The pits

N/A

Not available on video

N.I.D.

Not in distribution

Special thanks go to Guidance Ro-Man for his ratings symbol suggestion.



CHAIN OF DEATH (aka THE CHAIN) (2019)⌘⌘1/2

D: David Martin Porras. John Patrick Amedori, Adrienne Barbeau, Ray Wise, Madeline Zima, Jamie Clayton, Dey Young, Michael Shannon Jenkins. 101 mins. (MVD Visual) 7/19

Adrienne Barbeau should be familiar to "men of a certain age." Genre fans may remember Adrienne from *Swamp Thing* (1982) and couch potatoes could know her from the '70s sitcom *Maude*. Those Boomers viewed her as hot. Now she costars with fellow *Swamp Thing* alum Wise in *Chain of Death*. The two are used to promote the picture to those who are unfamiliar with lead actor Amedori. He plays a young San Francisco ophthalmologist who returns, with his wife Sarah (Zima), to his parents' (Barbeau, Wise) L.A. home to help his aging father as he confronts his own physi-

cal deterioration. His solution? A downtown club that euthanizes you, but only after you do the same to someone else. If that concept isn't creepy enough, Porras showcases the bloody results of a botched assisted suicide and the horror of ruined eye surgery. Amedori's performance is dependent on shtick lifted from *The Fugitive*. Dr. Richard Kimble used hair dye to transform himself into a man who resembled star David Janssen. When his character, Mike, becomes a murder suspect, he shaves his beard before the viewer can figure out which sitcom character he resembles. Barbeau is no self-parody but is overshadowed by Wise, who reveals the beating, cheating bastard that Mike remembers. MVD Visual subtly promotes nostalgia, locating this feature at the corner of Memory Lane and Elm Street.

—Ronald C. Epstein

CRITTERS ATTACK! (2019)

⌘⌘1/2

D: Bobby Miller. Tashiana Washington, Ava Preston, Jaeden Noel, Jack Fulton, Dee Wallace, Peter Clingman. 89 mins. (Warner Home Entertainment) 7/19

I haven't seen any of the previous entries in the 1980s-born *Critters* franchise, so I have no basis of comparison re the latest in the series, *Critters Attack!* I am, however, a big fan of director Bobby Miller's offbeat previous creature feature *The Master Cleanse* (aka *The Cleanse*) (VS #100), so I was interested to see what he would do with a well-known property. The result is a film that freshens things up for a new generation of potential fans—the previous series entry was released 27 years ago (!)—while giving a bit of fan service to longtime viewers. Furry, people-eating aliens called Krites land on Earth once again just as sushi delivery girl Drea (Washington) receives a second rejection letter from her dream college. Her younger brother Phillip (Noel) is obsessed with UFOs and aliens, which will come in handy when Drea takes on a babysitting gig for a professor's kids, nature-loving Trissy (Preston) and nine-year-old Jake (Fulton), who communicates solely through phone text messages. Drea discovers a white-furred Krite

during the foursome's walk through the woods, which makes the kids a main target of the rapidly breeding carnivores. The Krites look very cool, if sometimes a bit nostalgically corny (on purpose), with Miller wisely opting for practical effects as much as possible, as he did with his creatures in *The Master Cleanse*. Dee Wallace makes her first appearance in the franchise since the movie that kicked things off in 1986, as Aunt Dee, who obviously knows a thing or two about how to dispose of the invading hairy hordes. Miller ably balances frights and frolic and has two other genre-film vets on hand to assist: screenwriter Scott Lobdell, who penned *Happy Death Day*, and editor Mike Mendez, who has directed such fun features as *Big Ass Spider!* (VS #88) and *Don't Kill It*. *Critters Attack!* is a spirited monster romp with earnest young cast members giving it their all.

—Joseph Perry

