

ZOMBIE-RAMA!

THE WALKING DEAD GIRLS (2011)

881/2

D: Sean Skelding, Tyler Benjamin. Bruce Campbell, Lloyd Kaufman, Luna Moon, Linnea Quigley, George Romero. 70 mins. (Cheezy Flicks) 3/11

This sometimes amateurish but generally engaging documentary purports to examine the necrophile appeal of the titular femme fatales/zombie bimbos (or "zimbies" as they're known in the trade) with behind-the-scenes leers at Cheezy Flicks' already derivative new zimbie flick *Stripperland* (*Zombie Strippers and Zombies! Zombies! Zombies! Strippers vs. Zombies* [both VS #69] got there first), the shooting of what may be the first zombie pinup calendar, and an extensive chat with pioneering celluloid zimbie Linnea Quigley, forever burned into zombie fans' brains via her portrayal of the bottomless Trash in *Return of the Living Dead* (VS #45). But *The Walking Dead Girls* wanders further about the living-dead graveyard, bumping into a number of zombie pundits of varying degrees of fascination. Call us boomer-centric (but call us in time for the Early Brains Special) but it seems to us that old-timers like George Romero and Lloyd Kaufman and mid-timer Bruce Campbell, interviewed by self-proclaimed zimbie Luna Moon, supply the most cogent commentary here, easily out-articulating most of the younger folks on view, and the disc is well worth a look and listen for their contributions alone. A trip to Seattle's 2010 ZomBeon (VS #76) provides further living-dead distraction. *The Walking Dead Girls* would have benefited from a tighter edit, more film clips (though rights issues may well have intruded there) and at least a snippet of Feo y Loco's country rock classic "Redneck Necro" on the soundtrack (see: feoyloco.com). Still, there's enough here to seduce zombie-girl completists looking for a good time.

—The Phantom

THE ZOMBIE FARM (2009)888

D: Ricardo Islas. Adriana Catano, Nadia Rowinsky, Khotan, Monika Munoz, Roberto Montesinos. 90 mins. (Maya Entertainment) 3/11

When we at the *Scope* got the press release for this direct-to-disc chiller, we were told that it was part English, part Spanish. For all of the half-dozen or so lines that are spoken in Espanol, *Zombie Farm* hardly qualifies as a bilingual production. But it is an enjoyable no-budgeter. Produced in Louisiana by a small Latino production company which markets films to its own community, *Zombie*

Farm is an admirable little movie. The story combines elements of the *Living Dead* and voodoo genres, providing a reasonably good horror tale with a little bit of social commentary thrown into the mix. The titular farm is not unlike the lair of Murder Legendre (Bela Lugosi) in the 1932 classic *White Zombie*, a farm whose workers require no pay—because they're dead! It's explained that zombies are now the only way to get people to work the farm since Homeland Security makes it so hard to hire illegal immigrants. The plot also touches upon another important issue: domestic abuse. A young wife, tired of being beaten, seeks help from voodoo faith healers. She gets more than she bargained for: hubby is turned into a hungry, flesh-munching zombie. With voodoo and various types of witchcraft a big part of the local culture, Southern Louisiana makes a wonderful locale for supernatural storytelling: the smell of spirits is literally in the air. While not particularly scary, *Zombie Farm* makes the most of its settings. The largely natural lighting prevents a truly spooky atmosphere from settling in, but the story is fast-paced fun. None of the actors will win any awards for their work herein, but they all give acceptable performances. Maya's disc includes a making-of doc.

—David Elijah Nahmod

ZOMBIE WOMEN OF SATAN (2009)81/2

D: Steve O'Brien and Warren Speed. Warren Speed, Victoria Hopkins, Victoria Broom, Marysia Kay, Bill Fellows, Kathy Paul. 90 mins. (Screen Media Films) 3/11

Not the worst zombie movie I've ever seen, nor the greatest, *Zombie Women of Satan* is a rather ho-hum British "comedy" that isn't very funny and features large-breasted scantily clad or topless zombie girls. The premise, for what it's worth, posits that while a troupe of performance artists from The Golden Lotus go on a cross country trek to appear on television, some scientist (Fellows) is kidnapping cult-following girls, stripping them to their bras and panties, strapping them to a table and injecting them with a serum that turns them into zombies. He does this in his basement. He keeps his sex-crazed wife (Paul) chained up while his daughter (Kay) helps him get victims—for some reason not made terribly clear. Or they said, and I just wasn't paying that much attention. Co-director Warren plays Pervo the Clown, who lives up to his name by masturbating every 15 minutes or so while fleeing from zombie girls. Warwick Davis stunt double Pete Bonner plays Zeus, the dwarf who kicks ass. Rent only if you have a fetish for kayro syrup-stained half-naked girls getting bashed in the head with golf clubs and baseball bats while their mammaries jiggle. The rest of us can rent *Shaun of the Dead*.

—Dwight Kemper

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BONEYARD BONUS!

THE DEFILED (2010)B&W881/2

D: Julian Grant. Brian Shaw, Kathleen Lawlor, Angela Zagone. 100 mins. (Chemical Burn) 3/11

While his mutant zombies literally chew the fat, auteur Grant studiously eschews dialogue in his stark, dark, black-and-white tale of one unlikely family's odyssey through a post-apocalyptic wasteland. Sort of a *Night of the Living Dead* (Shaw's lead deader is even modeled on Bill Hinzman's iconic Cemetery Zombie) meets E. Elias Merhige's *The Begotten* (VS #14) by way of Ingmar Bergman's *Shame*, *The Defiled* reps a bleakly creative outing related, a la Marc Price's *Colin* (VS #77), from a zombie POV. The family in question consists of codebound dead man Yar, who operates on a cognitive level roughly equal to Howard Sherman's Bub in *Day of the Dead*, fugitive human woman Janice (Lawlor) and the mutant infant (straight from the *Eraserhead* maternity ward) for whom they ultimately share caring duties. Obstacles include predatory deaders, armed zombie hunters and an unforgiving landscape. While *The Defiled* has its rock'n'roll moments (we even get to See: The Birth of a Zombie Baby!), it's mostly a grim mood piece, a sustained primal nightmare that may unfold too slowly for viewers bred on today's fast-moving zombies (e.g., Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later*, Zack Snyder's *Dawn of the Dead*) and the character-driven conflicts of TV's *The Walking Dead*. On the upside, Shaw gives an impressive mime perf as the tortured Yar, while Grant earns kudos for sticking to his singular vision, enticing adventurous zombie fans to tune in.8

—The Phantom

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RESPIRE (2011) ♂♂1/2

D: David A. Cross. Tracy Teague, Mathew J. Wright, Vince Eustace, Jessica Keeler, Ellie Torrez. 91 mins. (MTI) 2/11

In 1936 Baltimore, a scientist is gunned down. With his wife's help, he breathes his last into a glass vial. With the vial now sequestered in a small chest, the widow flees to the Soviet Union and, under the credits, we follow the chest's circuitous route through the fortunes of war, theft and garage sales back to the United States, where, in the present day, it ends up in the hands of Teague, an antiques dealer who has only a few months to live. Wright appears one day, offering vast sums for the chest and a rare book going up for auction, which Teague secures despite the heavy competition from the glowering Eustace. Wondering what the deal is with these items, Teague discovers a key in the book that unlocks a compartment in the chest, revealing the vial. Removing the stopper, Teague winds up inhaling the contents and her cancer miraculously vanishes. As she rejoices in having been granted a second chance at life, however, she is plagued by blackouts and violent urges, and Eustace turns up, not taking his loss at the auction at all well. Though clearly working with a shoestring, writer/director Cross serves up a tale that, if not entirely coherent, is consistently imaginative and sets a brisk pace. Teague looks too healthy to be at death's door, but she tackles the part with conviction and gives the film a strong center. Wright and Eustace do well in the supporting roles, too. And though once we get to questions of immortality and personality transfers, the logic is a bit muddled, our sympathetic protagonist and the speed of events hold our interest. A modest little film, then, but likable.

—David Annandale

SKYLINE (2010) ♂♂♂

D: Colin and Greg Strause. Eric Balfour, Donald Faison, Scottie Thompson, Brittany Daniel, David Zayas. 94 mins. (Universal Studios) 3/11

Skyline is living proof that there's no reason to spend \$100 million making a film. Produced for a measly \$10 million, this highly profitable invasion chiller made its production costs back many times over. *Skyline* isn't going to change anyone's life. But if you're in the mood for a fast-paced, well-made, 1950s-styled sci-fi flick—albeit one made with 21st-century technology—then scope this one out. The script is simpler than most: a la the surprise monster hit *Cloverfield* (VS #67), it cuts right to the chase. Best buds from Brooklyn Jarrod (Balfour) and Terry (Faison) are reunited in Terry's Hollywood penthouse after a long separation. The very next morning, with no warning at all, the aliens come. For the remainder of the

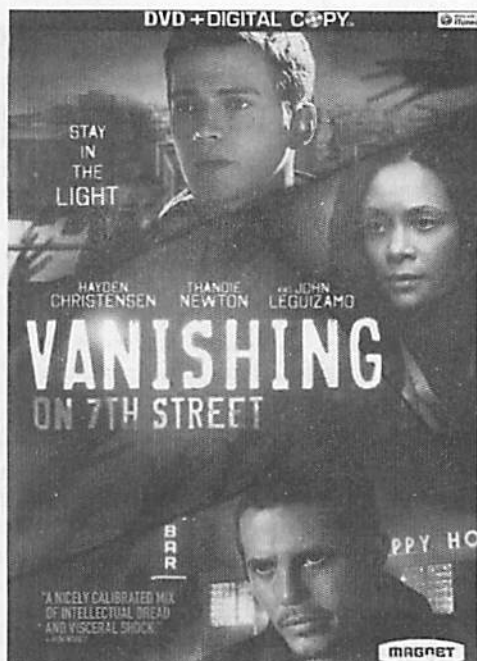
film, the guys and their gals struggle to get out of the building while the aliens literally cause Hell on Earth. It's never made clear what the aliens want. Food? World domination? Regardless, they take over quickly. Within one day, they appear to have brought humanity to its knees. As our heroes stare out their window into the horizon, they witness an awesome, terrifying sight: thousands of human bodies being sucked into a spaceship as though it were a vacuum. There isn't all that much character development and only a minimal amount of backstory. It's a study of a small group of friends struggling to survive a horrific nightmare beyond their wildest imaginings. The small cast plays off one another beautifully; the sheer terror in their eyes seems quite real. No, *Skyline* isn't high art. It's a film about being frightened to the point of madness. Taken on that level, *Skyline* works quite well. The disc has extended/deleted scenes plus two commentaries: one with the directors, another with the writers and producer.

—David Elijah Nahmod

VANISHING ON 7TH STREET (2011) ♂♂♂

D: Brad Anderson. Hayden Christensen, Thandie Newton, John Leguizamo, Jacob Latimore. 91 mins. (Magnet Releasing) 5/11

In Detroit, multiplex projectionist Paul (Leguizamo), TV reporter Luke (Christensen), physical therapist Rosemary (Newton) and 12-year-old James (Latimore) seem to be the sole survivors of a mysterious, worldwide, Rapture-like human vanishing act. The four take shelter at Sonny's, where James' mom tended bar, and try to calculate their next move while puzzling over the origins of the planet's sudden population depletion. In an inspired touch, providing musical accompaniment to their emotional swings is a tavern jukebox stocked with vintage R&B and doo-wop tunes. Atmosphere expert Anderson, who'd earlier helmed the spooky *Session 9* (VS #42), the paranoid *The Machinist* (VS #55) and the suspenseful *Transsiberian* (VS #69), scores again with another strong mood piece, a rare contemporary film that will make you think and feel in equal measure. Though many of the tropes are reminiscent of George Romero's seminal blend of the visceral and cerebral, *Night of the Living Dead*—even down to an attempted escape by truck—along with Stephen King's *The Langoliers* (VS #16), Michael Tolkin's *The Rapture* and any number of celluloid doomsday fables, *Vanishing* takes a subtler tack than most of the above. As in *NOTLD* and virtually all effective fright films, mortality is the fear; all that changes is the form in which it appears. Here, it is simply literal encroaching darkness, with Sonny's back-up generator supplying the sole source of illumination save for hand-held flashlights and lighters. Judging by several reviews posted on imdb.com, the film's lack of a more tangible physical threat—e.g., zombies, aliens, monsters—frustrated many viewers, but for us Anderson's Lewtonesque approach works brilliantly, undercut only by a weak fadeout



(alternate endings included among the disc's extras add just a slight tweak). A movie like *Vanishing on 7th Street* also depends on able performers to sell the tension and all four principals come through with compelling work, with Leguizamo's soulful turn leading the way. (Existential horror specialist Larry [Habit, *Wendigo*] Fessenden also contributes an eye-blink cameo.) Beyond the alternate endings, Magnet's bonus material includes an Anderson audio commentary, some interesting behind-the-scenes featurettes, and *Fangoria* interviews with the director and young thesp Latimore.

THE VIOLENT KIND (2010) ♂♂

D: The Butcher Brothers. Cory Knauf, Taylor Cole, Bret Roberts, Christina Prousalis, Tiffany Shepis, Nick Tagas, Joe Egender. 89 mins. (Image Entertainment) 5/11

A familiar mix of timeworn terror tropes receives a bit of a lift with a late-arriving Lovecraftian twist in The Butcher Brothers' blend of tame biker antics and backwoods horror riffs. Three not particularly tough hog-hounds and a trio of femmes find themselves trapped in an isolated house when their wheels mysteriously refuse to work. The situation worsens, taking an *Evil Dead* turn, when Michelle (contempo scream queen Shepis in a high-energy perf), embittered biker Cody's (Knauf) taunting ex, gets possessed by a demon and expresses her rage by eating fellow biker Elroy's (Tagas) face. Much milling and arguing ensue until a quintet of '50s-style sadists (with a secret) materialize to further torment our surviving protags. This Sundance Official Selection (midnight division) saves most of its imagination for the final reel; patient fright fans may want to wade through the tired dialogue and clichés to witness the creepy payoff, while others may choose to ride on. Extras include a making-of featurette, deleted scenes and trailer.

—The Phantom