

a gang of amateur kidnapers. What the perpetrators lacked in experience, though, they made up for with chutzpah and beginners' luck. Although it isn't clear if they would hold up their end of the bargain, Heineken and his chauffeur narrowly avoided freezing to death and most of the kidnapers managed to avoid justice, one way or another, for years. As usual, Hauer is excellent as the dour industrialist, for whom the ordeal inspired a dramatic change in his lifestyle, personality and relationship with a long-suffering wife. "The Heineken Kidnapping" is split into four equal parts: the planning of the crime, the victims' 21-day ordeal, the police investigation and rescue, and extradition standoffs between France and Holland, and Paraguay and Holland, which went on for years. The re-creation of Heineken's imprisonment – chained to the wall of a cramped cell in an abandoned warehouse – is extremely well done, as is the shocking near-miscarriage of justice in the courts.

In similarly plotted crime stories made in the U.S., filmmakers typically will reserve at least some small measure of sympathy for the criminals, whose misguided decisions can be attributed to societal, cultural or parental malfunctions. Treurniet doesn't ignore Heineken's cold personality and philandering – neither of which had anything to do with the crime – and, with one exception, the kidnapers are portrayed as young punks willing to test Holland's lenient judicial system. The only wild card here is the gang's ringleader, who had an ax to grind with Heineken. His father had earlier lost a suit against the brewery, his former employer, whose encouragement of excessive drinking not only made him an alcoholic, but also led to his emphysema from too much smoking while socializing. Even though Treurniet freely admits to taking certain liberties with the facts surrounding the case, it didn't prevent three of the convicted kidnapers from suing him for misrepresenting them and opening them up to public disdain. Not surprisingly, they didn't prevail. The Blu-ray adds a making-of featurette with interviews and a visit to a warehouse that virtually serves as a museum to the kidnapping. – *Gary Dretzka*

### Monsieur Lazhar

Looking back at our experiences in grade school, we can still see the faces of most our friends and teachers and recall certain key milestones in our educational development. Victims of bullying by fellow students or ridicule at the hands of a teacher or principal may recall horrors others don't, but, by and large, things happened at too great a velocity to stay in the mind of a child for a very long time. With rare exceptions, it also would be impossible to know how our teachers interacted with each other behind the doors of their lounges and, after school, with their friends. I suspect that the sixth-graders we meet in "Monsieur Lazhar" never will forget Martine, the teacher who committed suicide one morning before class, and Bachir Lazhar, the teacher who replaced her. In addition to having to stand in for a popular teacher, Lazhar is struggling to deal with a tragedy of his own. He had found refuge in Quebec after Algerian extremists threatened to murder his wife as a result of a book she had written. Lazhar was in the process of preparing for her arrival in Montreal when he learned that she and their children had died in a suspicious fire back home. Although this was mostly kept hidden to fellow teachers and the students, his fragility is clearly visible to viewers.

As the school year progresses, it also becomes obvious that Martine's suicide has had a deeper impact on the children than first observed by the psychologist brought in by the district. Because Lazhar is the adult who spends more time with the students than even some of their parents, he feels obliged to address their concerns when tensions in the classroom mount. He doesn't want to intercede, but is left little choice when it becomes obvious that the parents have abdicated their duty in addressing the suicide and Martine's sudden departure from the kids' lives. For his troubles, this gentle and caring 55-year-old immigrant has his background probed by the self-absorbed parents of the bossiest student. They take their findings to the school board and, well, why spoil the story? Mohamed Fellaq is splendid as Lazhar, as are the child actors who represent a cross-section of middle-class Montreal. Aside from anything that happens in the story, "Monsieur Lazhar" should serve as a reminder to tax-weary Americans that education budgets should be preserved, even as changes in pensions and benefits are negotiated. If parents don't fight back against pound-foolish tax reformers, the negative impact on our society could prove irreversible. Phillippe Falardeau's heart-breaking film was deservedly nominated for an Oscar in the Best Foreign Language Film category. – *Gary Dretzka*

### Screaming in High Heels

#### Trucker's Woman

In the entertaining new documentary, "Screaming in High Heels," scream queen extraordinaire Linnea Quigley describes her appeal thusly, "I guess I stood out because I was pretty and people liked to see me get chopped up." That Quigley and her fellow scream queens were naked or topless when they were being attacked by grotesque sociopaths or mutants from outer space was the icing on the cake. The rise, fall and resurrection of horror movies once relegated to drive-in theaters are chronicled here by several veteran filmmakers and participants. The doc really belongs to Quigley, Brinke Stevens and Michelle Bauer, whose presence in any such movie assured fans there would be enough boobs, blood and mayhem to make their investment in a ticket worthwhile. Most such documentaries, and there have been plenty, have focused on the careers and films of the acting talent. I probably knew as much about Quigley going into "Screaming in High Heels" as I did when it ended. Still it would be tough not to be enchanted by these veteran stars, who, while well into their 50s, still make the rounds of fanboy conventions and frequently are cast in genre flicks.

The arc of the industry begins in the 1950s, with the boom in drive-in movies. It got a boost with the introduction of the MPAA ratings code, which, ironically, opened the door for nudity and simulated sex in movies with large and minute budgets, alike. Just as drive-in movies began to disappear from the American landscape, mom-and-pop video stores emerged as the place to find outrageously titled genre fare. All three women could be seen in "Sorority Babes in the Slimeball Bowl-O-Rama" and "Nightmare Sisters." Premium cable channels also helped pick up the slack in sales. Just as the direct-to-VHS movie trend was reaching warp speed, however, the mom-and-pop stores were forced to make way for Blockbuster and Hollywood Video outlets in every strip mall from Seattle to Key West. Instead of three reigning scream queens, there were now 300 women who divided their time between porn and slasher films claiming the title. The distribution channel narrowed significantly – the major chains weren't keen on the whole sex-and-violence thing – and the expense of making movies on film became prohibitive. Today, of course, any 13-year-old with a cellphone can make and distribute a movie of their own and, if they can afford it, hire Stevens, Quigley or Bauer to make a cameo. When it comes to screaming, the ladies can still bring it.

No matter what anyone thinks about the movies they distribute, no one can accuse the folks at Cheezy Flicks of misrepresenting their products. On the DVD package of "Trucker's Woman," for example, it clearly states, "One of America's hilariously cheesy low-budget drive-in wonders." The only way "Trucker's Woman" (a.k.a., "Truckin' Man") could be any cheesier – cheezier? – is if it came with nachos and jalapenos attached to the box. But, seriously, folks ... I wonder if the May 1975 release of this would-be expose of mob ties to corrupt shipping companies somehow might have had anything to do with the disappearance, two months later, of former Teamsters boss Jimmy Hoffa. Christian Slater's dad, Michael Hawkins, plays a young man who becomes an over-the-road trucker after his father is killed in a suspicious accident. He was attempting to organize independent drivers unhappy about having to transport stolen merchandise for the syndicate. In a scene that would be ripped off eight years later for "National Lampoon's Vacation," driver Mike is distracted by a hot blond (Mary Cannon) in a convertible who, he's convinced, wants him to stalk her from roadhouse to roadhouse for the entire length of South Carolina. When he finally shows up at the door of her fleabag motel room, unannounced, we notice that her blond tresses were donated to the production by Wigs 'R' Us and she favors granny panties. Turns out, as well, the blond is the daughter of one of the mobsters Mike blames for the death of his father.

Contrary to the DVD's cover art, "Trucker's Woman" isn't remotely sexy and the action is far less than riveting. The acting is laughable, as well. "Trucker's Woman" is exactly the kind of bargain-basement flick that filled the bill at drive-in theaters throughout the South and rarely could be found north of the Mason-Dixon Line, like the infinitely better "Thunder Road." The peek-a-boo nudity likely pushed the limits of what Bible Belt audiences were allowed to experience in the mid-1970s. The only other interesting things in the movie are the presence of future Emmy winner, Larry Drake and Doodles Weaver, uncle of Sigourney Weaver and former member of Spike Jones' band. Puffing on a pipe and wearing a tweed suit, Weaver looks as if he wandered over from a completely different movie shoot and no one told him to leave. The DVD arrives with vintage intermission shorts and Cheezy trailers. – *Gary Dretzka*