

THE UNSEEN (2016) ⚡⚡

D: Geoff Redknap. Aden Young, Julia Sarah Stone, Camille Sullivan, Ben Cotton, Eugene Lipinski, Maxwell Haynes, Mary Chadburn. 108 mins. (Monarch Home Entertainment) 3/19

If you are a lower-class, picaresque Canadian male, you just may be a hoser. If that's you, you are probably a stereotypical character that can be found in such films as **Trailer Park Boys: The Movie**, **Fubar**, and this one. The first two are comedies, but this DVD is packaged as a "sci-fi thriller." Vancouver father Bobby Longmore (Young) ditches his promising pro hockey career, hot wife Darlene (Sullivan) and young daughter Eva (Stone) when he discovers that he is slowly becoming invisible. Bobby, now an errand boy for sleazy drug dealer Crisby (Cotton), is summoned by his ex to deal with their troubled teen—who has inherited Daddy's condition. Young is credible as The Invisible Hoser because his natural abilities are supported by cleverly applied makeup and creatively creepy puppetry. Stone is natural as Eva. This movie was created by British Columbians who believe that their province is more than just a stand-in for American locales. Fortunately, they don't offer strident Canadian nationalism, just gore flavored with maple syrup. This is expressed in a scene which gives new meaning to the old warning: Don't Feed the Bears. **The Unseen** makes Canadian genre talent visible.

—Ronald Charles Epstein

THE VAULT (-2018) ⚡⚡1/2

D: Dan Bush. Taryn Manning, Francesca Eastwood, Scott Haze, Q'orianka Kilcher, James Franco. 91 mins. (MVD Visual) 3/19

A team of bank robbers headed up by Manning and Eastwood take over Centurion Trust, holding staff and customers hostage. The upstairs vault turns out to be disappointingly empty, but assistant manager Franco tells the thieves that the real riches are in the old vault downstairs. Breaking open that vault, however, unleashes a deadly supernatural force. **The Vault** has a terrific premise—robbers run afoul of a haunted bank—and its first act is terrific. The robbery scenes are tense, disturbing, and the pace is relentless. As well, though we never see more than a few brief shots outside the bank, there's a palpable sense of a city where violence could explode at any moment. So the setup is top-notch. Unfortunately, once the ghosts are unleashed, the execution lets the premise down. The ghosts themselves aren't badly done, but the script begins to make less and less sense. One of the robbers

set upon by the ghosts apparently disappears not only from a closed vault but from the memories of his cohorts, who never mention him again. The rules of the supernatural events are ill-defined, and we are left with many questions, not

in the sense of mystery but of simple confusion. If the main action, then, is nowhere near as strong as the first act, the film remains entertaining. The cast does well, with Manning and Eastwood particularly strong as the leads, coming across as convincingly hard-boiled even when the script renders the actual characterizations a bit murky. While it's hard to give the film a resounding recommendation, there are enough elements that work to make it worth a look.

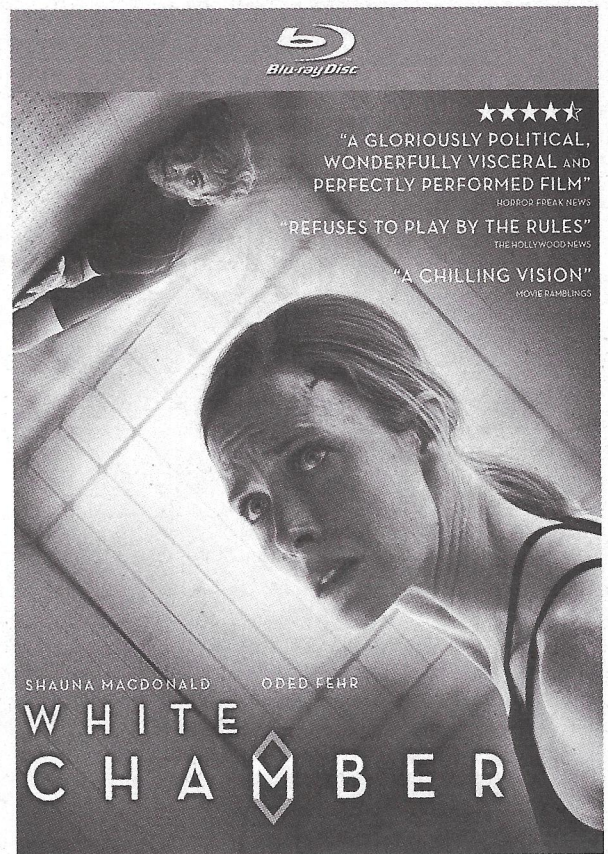
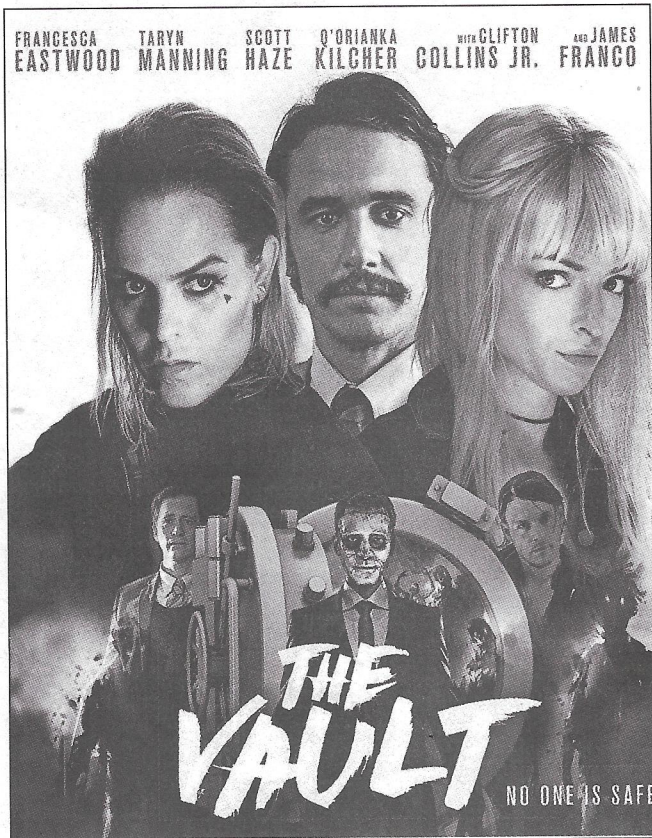
—David Annandale

WHITE CHAMBER

(2018) ⚡⚡
D: Paul Raschid. Shauna MacDonald, Oded Fehr, Amrita Acharia, Sharon Maughan, Nicholas Farrell. 89 mins. (Dark Sky Films) 5/19.

Civil war has erupted across the United Kingdom and Elle Chrystler awakens a captive in a sterile white cell. Her captor questions her relentlessly, using the many functions of the cell to torture her until she starts giving useful information. As the torturous interrogation continues, Chrystler fights to keep secrets but her captors know how to manipulate her and have a number of secrets of their own. This is a political sci-fi thriller that offers up a fair share of minor surprises and plot twists. The story unfolds in a non-linear fashion and we are given a glimpse of what is going on not only inside the cell but outside as well. This is a tight little thriller told with a limited cast and sets. What derailed it for me was the fact that it immediately calls to mind the superior **Cube** series, but it is never as clever as any of those flicks. MacDonald and Fehr do well propelling the drama, even though their characters feel underdeveloped. To me it all seems like a half-baked episode of **Black Mirror** that never fully takes a moral stand among all the character conflict. Those who enjoy the darker, grittier sci-fi flicks of the '70s will no doubt appreciate it. **White Chamber** moves at a brisk pace and poses a couple twisted ideas along the way, as good sci-fi should always strive to do. ⚡

—Rob Freese



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