

BEWARE (2010) ♂♂

D: Jason Daly. Adam Leadbeater, Lorena King, Cecilia Huete, Vivi Pineda, Edward Madera. 94 mins. (Maya) 11/11

As a business venture, Maya Entertainment should be saluted. The Louisiana-based production company's primary agenda is to produce mainstream-styled films by and for Latinos. As a standard slasher film, **Beware** has definite crossover appeal. It appears to be an attempt to launch a new slice-and-dice horror franchise a la Freddy and Jason. Shane (Madera) would be the new killer's name. He's a little boy who was chained to a tree and tortured—this experience turned him into a mindless murder machine. Much to Shane's delight, a group of teens, on their way to a Latino music festival, get stranded in the town of Shady Grove when their car breaks down. One by one, they're slaughtered. Graphically. While gorehounds will love **Beware's** excessive blood and entrails spewing, other viewers may be less enamored. The paper-thin plot goes nowhere. The characters are self-absorbed, arrogant and annoying. Not a one of them is likable or worth caring about. There's a cheap thrill involved in watching the grisly details of the numerous excessively violent deaths, but that's really all **Beware** has to offer. If that's your cup of tea, then **Beware** runneth over.

—David-Elijah Nahmod

CARNAGE (2011) ♂♂1/2

D: Roman Polanski. Jodie Foster, Kate Winslet, Christoph Waltz, John C. Reilly. 80 mins. (Sony Pictures) 3/12

While no director does claustrophobia better than Polanski (see **Repulsion**, **The Tenant** [VS #48], and even **Bitter Moon** [VS #11]), adapting Yasmina Reza's single-set play about bickering bourgeoisie seems a strangely tame move for the normally stylish, edgy auteur. Almost entirely dialogue-driven, **Carnage** (not to be confused with the Andy Milligan horror of the same name) plays closer to an intriguing early draft than a finished product. The premise: Brooklyn parents, sensitive PC writer Penelope (Foster) and comparatively loutish salesman hubby Michael (Reilly), invite their somewhat wealthier neighbors, creepy corporate lawyer Alan (Waltz) and investment broker Nancy (Winslet), to their apartment following a violent playground altercation between the couples' young sons. Seems Penelope and Michael's boy sustained a fairly serious injury as a result of the row and they seek an apology from Alan and Nancy's aggro offspring. The confab soon devolves into a high-decibel psychodrama in a **Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?** vein as the participants shed their civilized mantles to get down and dirty. Reza's play (Polanski receives a co-scripting credit) cleverly shifts

the principals' allegiances, with the bouts sometimes lining up couple against couple, at other times gender vs. gender. Unfortunately, once set in motion, the premise, at least in Reza and Polanski's hands, has no particular place to go, providing in the end a pallid non-payoff to the histrionic proceedings. A greater emphasis on either repressed drawing-room irony or savage physical brutality might have lent the enterprise more oomph and dark laughs. As it stands, **Carnage** works best as a bold-relief showcase, peppered with caustic one-liners, for four exceedingly sharp thespians. **Carnage** also earns our early nod for Best Upchuck Scene of 2012, courtesy of Winslet's projectile vomiting, a spectacle that would do Tromateur Lloyd Kaufman proud. Extras include bonus interviews with Reilly and Waltz, red carpet footage, and actors' notes.

—The Phantom

CAUGHT INSIDE (2010) ♂♂1/2

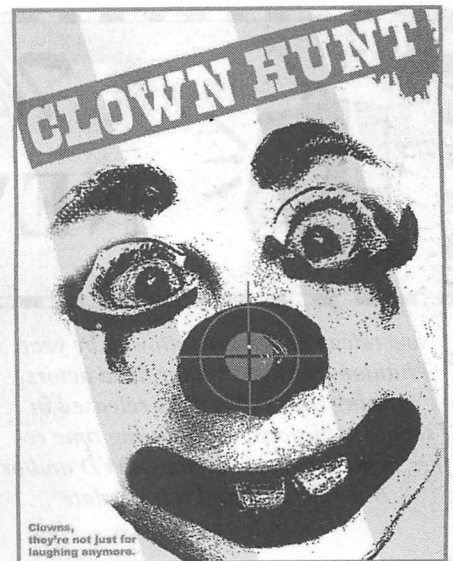
D: Adam Blaicklock. Ben Oxenbould, Daisy Betts, Sam Lyndon, Simon Lyndon, Peter Phelps, Leeanna Walsman. 91 mins. (Screen Media Films) 4/12

Boats and booze tend to dissolve inhibitions in tropical waters. The Hedonist's captain (Phelps) points out everyone's responsibilities the better to counter potential problems. Unfortunately, passenger Bull (Oxenbould) ignores the rules by hitting on fellow tourist Samantha (Betts). To maintain order, the captain eventually places him on a deserted island, not realizing that he is dealing with an adult psychopath who violently rejects his "time out." Director Blaicklock displays a keen visual sense in his first feature: scenic Maldives locations enhance the film's credibility. The tour boat is also effectively used. Oxenbould is not a hastily recruited Bondi Beach bum but a capable veteran actor (check out his Internet Movie Database photo). His character plays the fun-loving picaresque bloke, even as he turns everyone's life into a waking nightmare. Phelps' performance establishes reality; his aforementioned "skipper's orientation" explicitly explains the captain's function to passengers and viewers alike. Feminists may view Betts' Sam ambivalently. She is introduced as an unwanted source of sexual tension who ultimately reveals her inner strength, subtly shifting dramatic gears in the process. Blaicklock the writer is less realistic than the director because his villain's apparent indestructibility suggests a classic Hollywood monster, not a contemporary indie bully. **Jaws** drove people from American beaches; **Caught Inside** may scare you away from Asian seas.

—Ronald Charles Epstein

CLOWN HUNT (2012) ♂♂

D: Barry Tubb. David Keith, Matthew Posey, Kasey Stevens, Brendan Wayne, Trick Kelly, Barry Tubb. 90 mins. (Seminal Films/MVD Visual) 3/12



A moderately clever sketch idea gets stretched way beyond the breaking point in this repetitive regional romp. In rural Texas heavily-armed rednecks assemble for the start of clown-hunting season, where those colorfully bedecked figures of fun, running loose in the wild, are fair game for our assorted crack shots and crackpots. Our posse, headed by Hollywood character thesp Keith in a brief cameo, harbors the usual suspects, from the bloodthirsty service vet to the closeted clown who secretly applies bulbous red noses and greasepaint in his tent. Some imagination went into the complex clown classifications—Happy Clowns are there for the bagging, for example, while Sad Clowns are out of season—with white-faced Albino Willie (Kelly) shaping up as the ultimate prize, the clown equivalent of Moby Dick. The clowns themselves can be a feisty, even sadistic lot, giving their pursuers lethal grief galore. Withal, **Clown Hunt** provides roughly 15 minutes of fresh laughs before spinning its clown-car wheels, but evil-clown-movie completists may want to scope it out.

—The Phantom

GRUMPY OLD CRITICS (Say the Darndest Things) DEPT.

Locked in on Lockout

"**Lockout** is effectively a Besson-ified gloss on John Carpenter's **Escape from New York**, but with digital effects and more tattoos."
Manohla Dargis, *The New York Times*

"Too serious to be a parody and too stupid to be a viable action pic, **Lockout** floats like space junk in the final frontier."
Lisa Schwarzbaum, *Entertainment Weekly*

"Movies this bad need to be revered in public places. Go see it in a mall, and try to sneak a beer or two in with you."
David Denby, *The New Yorker*