

# DVDementia

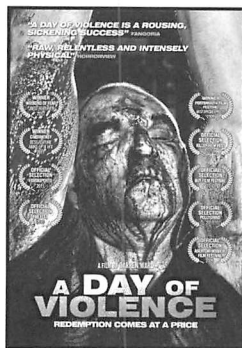
Though it was a theatrical dud when first released, 1989's **RED SCORPION** (Synapse) stands out from the usual '80s action schlock thanks to its savvy casting, picturesque scenery and laughably-hamhanded "fuck Communism" jingoism. Post-MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE Dolph Lundgren stars as walking tree-trunk Lt. Nikolai Rachenko, a Spetsnaz hotshot whose latest mission is to assassinate the rebel leader of a small African country currently under Soviet domination. Nickolai goes undercover as a disorderly drunk, befriends anti-Russian folks while behind bars (including always-entertaining M. Emmet Walsh as a foul-mouthed American reporter), stages a jail break, then infiltrates the insurgents' base. But along the way, stolid Rachenko is affected by the indigenous people's desire for freedom. Will this "perfect killing machine" allow compassion to trump his thick-headed allegiance to Mother Russia? Any deep message



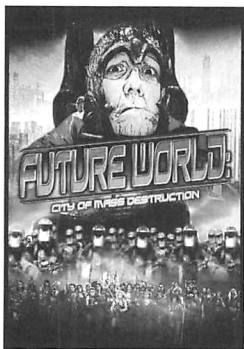
is only fleeting though, since **RED SCORPION**'s primary goal is to kick ass and spew propaganda, as these evil Russkies torch villages, commit atrocities and fly about in heavily-armed gunships. The script by Arne Olsen (who, tellingly, later penned **MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS: THE MOVIE**) bogs down during its lumbering, Joseph Campbell-esque mid-section, as escaped Nikolai treks across the wilderness, bonds with a Bushman and has a personal epiphany — just in time to participate in the big Commie-slaughtering finale. This role wasn't a huge stretch for Lundgren, but he handles the hackneyed action well, with co-stars Brion James as a sadistic Soviet who approves of torture (which would technically make him a Neocon nowadays) and Carmen Argenti as a Cuban Colonel. Though often undercut by the script's leaden right-wing agenda, it's fun, fast-paced B-movie hokum. The DVD/Blu-ray combo includes a commentary with director Joseph Zito (**MISSING IN ACTION**) and recent interviews with Dolph, make-up FX guru Tom Savini (who shares his behind-the-scenes home movies) and producer/staunch-anti-Communist/convicted-felon/overall-scumbag Jack Abramoff.

Writer-director Darren Ward's throwback to hard-boiled 1970's Eurocrime flicks, **A DAY OF VIOLENCE** (MVD Visual), is a startling British indie that revels in ballsy criminals, gunfights, sex, and (most of all) vicious, blood-soaked brutality. Mitchell Parker (Nick Rendell) is your typical sociopathic, low-end debt collector and one day, while torturing a drugged-out deadbeat (**CANNIBAL FEROX**'s Giovanni Lombardo Radice) who's late with his payment, discovers 100 Grand hidden in the guy's shithole flat. For Mitchell, it's a no-brainer — just slit the loser's throat and steal the cash — unaware that this money actually belongs to Boswell (Victor D. Thorn), the most depraved mobster in the whole damned city, who also happens to be Mitchell's brand new boss! How exactly do we know Boswell has anger management issues? Well, when he suspects one of

his flunkies of skimming cash, he trusses him up and (in one of the film's most disgusting moments) graphically chops off his balls with garden shears! Ironically, Mitchell's first assignment is to help locate this missing money, with one incident after another going horribly wrong — leading to an innocent woman's torture, a barroom massacre, Mitchell going on the run (with his battered face resembling a raw meat loaf), and an astronomical body count. Ward wrings a good deal of suspense from this fairly routine scenario. Rendell's everyman look reminded me of past crime-film palookas like **CALIBER 9**'s Gastone Moschin, while the script gives Mitchell just enough misguided decency to keep us invested in the dude's fate. Its believably gritty setting makes the violence all the more unnerving, and though often unrelentingly sadistic, it's also a damned fine tale of urban U.K. crime and punishment. DVD extras include an interview with Radice and 78 minutes of making-of featurettes.



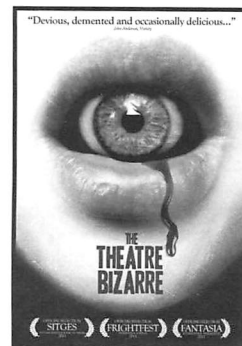
It's immediately obvious that the new sci-fi/fantasy no-budgeter, **FUTURE WORLD: CITY OF MASS DESTRUCTION** (Chemical Burn), was highly influenced by **HEAVY METAL**, with director Daniel Falicki shooting his live actors against a makeshift green screen, adding digital backdrops, then running the whole shebang through a free video plug-in called "Cartoon," which gives it a vaguely-rotoscoped appearance. Unfortunately, the end result more often looks like shit and is a tedious, headache-inducing mess... After four



atomic holocausts, the only remaining city in the year 30,000 A.D. is Grand Rapids, Michigan. Populated by a motley mix of humans, misfits and mutants, and controlled by a few tyrannical corporations, the viewer is tossed headfirst into several half-baked, tenuously-interconnected episodes involving female warriors, slaughtered villagers, an arena death match, a grizzled ex-cop on a mission, an aged Emperor, egomaniacal villains, political power plays, the occasional monster, a pair of freaky couch-potato stoners, plus a scheme to hoard the remaining natural resources and save the rich and powerful when the planet's atmosphere fails. How does it all turn out? Frankly, I couldn't care less, since every aspect of this film is stunningly misguided. Instead of looking strange and exotic, it's merely an eyesore; the patchwork, cliché-riddled script keeps introducing more and more grating characters; despite its faux-animation veneer, the costumes, props and make-up never rise to the level of your average cosplay nerd; all

attempts at humor fall flat; and even the big battle scenes are numbingly dull. Although the enthusiasm of its cast and crew is certainly admirable, I can't imagine anyone outside of their small circle of friends being able to stomach this ugly, indulgent, long-winded, 127-minute-long(!) steaming pile. The disc includes a making-of short that gives you an idea of its preposterously-cheap budget.

Film anthologies are notoriously tricky endeavors, and even the best of 'em can be annoyingly inconsistent. **THE THEATRE BIZARRE** (Image) is no exception, as it rounds up some of today's most intriguing, under-appreciated indie directors, then unleashes them in short form and without any connecting theme... In Richard Stanley's "The Mother of Toads," a couple travelling through a remote region of France encounters a local witch (**THE BEYOND**'s Catriona MacColl). The guy stupidly gets stoned on witch's brew and has a disastrous morning after, while his better half is terrified by a slimy, Lovecraftian toad monster. Though highly atmospheric, it's also astoundingly silly... Buddy Giovinazzo's "I Love You" delivers a scaldingly intimate marital meltdown. In a Berlin apartment, a man (André Hennicke) awakens, bloodied on his bathroom floor, and recalls fragments of the previous night — his wife moving out, his own pleading, one final fuck — and anyone familiar with Buddy's work (e.g. **COMBAT SHOCK**) knows to expect a brutal denouement...



A man suffers from repeated castration nightmares in Tom Savini's "Wet Dreams," with his overlapping dreams of marital infidelity (to wife Debbie Rochon) delivering gory imagery aplenty. The most mainstream horror entry of the bunch, it's also the cheesiest and most emotionally empty... In Douglas Buck's "The Accident," a confused little girl has a great many questions about death after witnessing a roadside fatality. At only 10 minutes, this is the shortest episode, but also the truest and most quietly unnerving... Karim Hussain's "Vision Stains" contains several queasy moments (thanks to hypodermic needles jabbed into eyeballs), as a female serial killer (Kaniehtiio Horn) steals key moments from the lives of women at the moment of their death, then chronicles their tragic experiences in her journals. It's a fascinating premise, but the overbearing style somewhat neuters its impact... Lastly, David Gregory's "Sweets" adds some pitch black humor to the mix, as a disgusting couple with a fetishistic fondness for sweets separates — leading to a mix of stark emotions, absurd situations, spectrular gore, plus an appearance by Lynn Lowry (**THEY CAME FROM WITHIN**)... Let's not forget about Jeremy Kasten's eerie framing segments, in which a woman is the sole audience member for a theatre performance hosted by Udo Kier's mechanical man... Buddy and Buck take top honors in this wildly mixed bag, that's at its best when dissecting the darkest, most genuine crevasses of the human condition. Extras includes a directors' commentary, as well as interviews with Giovinazzo, Gregory and Kasten.