

SCREAM FACTORY

(\$29.98 Blu-ray) 6/13

THE HOWLING (1981) ♂♂♂

D: Joe Dante. Dee Wallace, Patrick Macnee, Dennis Dugan, Christopher Stone, Belinda Balaski, Kevin McCarthy, Elisabeth Brooks. 91 mins.

After TV news reporter Karen White (Wallace) is attacked in an adult bookstore while on assignment, she is prescribed some rehab time in The Colony by Dr. Waggnner (Macnee). The other residents are friendly, if not a little strange, and Karen doesn't care for the way Marsha (Brooks) eyes her husband Bill (Stone) like a hungry dog eyes a pork chop. She calls her friend Terry (Balaski) to help figure out what is going on in the picturesque getaway. Terry soon learns that psychopath Eddie Quist (Robert Picardo) has some connections to The Colony, but then discovers a deadly secret when she is face to face with a seven-foot tall, bipedal werewolf. Dante's sure hand at directing, John Sayles' deft scripting, and a wonderful cast that also includes John Carradine, Slim Pickens, Dick Miller, Kenneth Tobey and cameos by Roger Corman and Forrest J Ackerman make this one of the most memorable scare flicks of the early '80s. The film is also remarkable for Rob Bottin's amazing effects work, most notably the transformation of Picardo from snarling psycho to snarling wolfman. Every aspect of this film delivers. It was released theatrically by Avco Embassy, one of the most genre-friendly independents of all time. The film looks great and is rounded out with a number of extra features, many of which appeared on the MGM Special Edition DVD years ago. If it's been a while since you've seen it, or you've never seen it, it's time to sit back and prepare yourself for one of the best werewolf movies ever made.

—Rob Freese

SHOUT! FACTORY

(\$26.99 Blu-ray + DVD) 5/13

CRIMEWAVE (1985) ♂♂♂

D: Sam Raimi. Reed Birney, Sheree J. Wilson, Edward R. Pressman, Louise Lasser, Paul L. Smith, Brion James, Bruce Campbell. 86 mins.

When Ernest Trend (Pressman) discovers his business partner is about to sell their company out from under him, he hires two incompetent "exterminators" (Smith and James) to snuff him before the transaction is finalized. When Trend's wife Helene (Lasser) witnesses the crime, the cartoony hitmen target her for extermination. Bumbling, innocent doofus Vic Ajax (Birney) gets framed for the crimes and tells the story from death row where he is moments away from doing the hot squats in the electric chair. Considered Raimi's lost film, this slapstick comedy is actually an entertaining riff

on film noir, co-written by the Coen Brothers, Ethan and Joel. There are a number of extremely funny gags throughout the picture, sprinkled in with plenty of references to the director's beloved Three Stooges and the screwball comedies of yore. Smith and James are amusing as the dim-witted exterminators, but James' cackling, rat-faced killer eventually wears thin. Campbell cheeses it up as "The Heel." Dumped by the studio, the film was barely released before being condemned to video, where few people caught up with it. Unavailable for decades, this misfortune is rectified by Shout! Factory's release, which includes the original trailer, interviews with Pressman, Campbell and Birney, as well as a Campbell commentary. An enjoyable farce when you're in the mood for something silly.

—Rob Freese

SHOUT! FACTORY

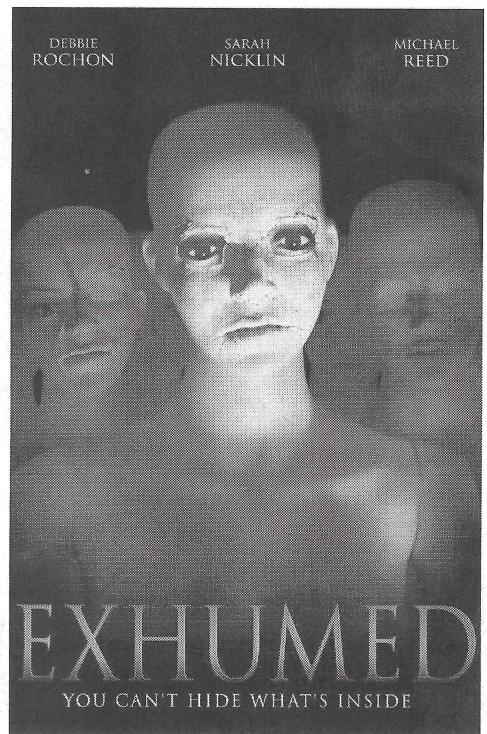
(\$19.97 Blu-ray) 7/13

THE INCREDIBLE MELTING MAN (1977) ♂♂♂

D: William Sachs. Alex Rebar, Burr DeBenning, Myron Healey, Michael Aldredge, Ann Sweeny, Cheryl Rainbeaux Smith, Janus Blythe. 84 mins.

After witnessing the sun through Saturn's rings (I guess?), astronaut Steve West (Rebar) comes back to Earth as a snot monster preying on people because that's what snot monsters from outer space do. Geeky Dr. Ted Nelson (DeBenning), who constantly reminds everyone who he is when not complaining about being out of crackers for his soup, is ordered by General Perry (Healey) to find West and bring him back alive. West drips all over the countryside, leaving goo puddles everywhere he goes while scaring little kids, ripping off heads and eating old people who steal lemons from a lemon grove. In the film's final moments, West is shot and melts into a pile of snot and pus before being apprehended. Goofy is the best word to describe this enjoyable horror/sci-fi drive-in flick from AIP. The premise is ridiculous, since we never know why West is melting, and the acting so broad it plays more like a comedy, which director Sachs claims was his intention, even after the producers requested a straight horror film. Still, it has that special something that makes it irresistible to lovers of '70s drive-in cinema. Most of that is due to the fantastic special effects crafted by a young Rick Baker and his small crew, which also included future FX heavyweights Greg Cannon and Rob Bottin. Smith shows up briefly as a model in one of the lamest photo shoots ever. MGM Limited Edition Collection released a nice DVD-R of the film in 2011, but fans are urged to pick up Shout! Factory's new Blu-ray, which sports a hi-def makeover as well as interviews, a Sachs commentary and various trailers and radio spots. "You've never seen anything 'til you've seen the sun through the rings of Saturn!" Indeed, Steve West. Indeed. ♂

—Rob Freese



INDIE WINNER OF THE SEASON

EXHUMED (2011) B&W ♂♂♂

D: Richard Griffin. Debbie Rochon, Sarah Nicklin, Michael Reed, Michael Thurber, Rick Tretheway, Evalena Marie, Jonathan Thompson. 93 mins. (Wild Eye Releasing) 6/13

Indie filmmaker Griffin is best known for his skewed satirical genre jabs, like **Feeding the Masses** (VS #57) and **The Disco Exorcist** (VS #86). But while there's perversity aplenty on view in **Exhumed**, Griffin and screenwriter Guy Benoit opt to go the surreal black-and-white horror noir route, cultivating something of a **Spider Baby** vibe, played straight (sort of). Cult actress and frequent *Scope* scribe Rochon gives a chilling perf as Governess, self-appointed enforcer of a mysterious dysfunctional family nominally (bald)headed by Thurber, operating out of (and seemingly stuck in) a Bates-style abode complete with a basement embalming lab populated by **Bucket of Blood**-like mannequins. Two clueless sisters, sensitive Laura (Nicklin), who's smitten with unwise young boarder Chris (Reed), and flirtatious Rocki (Marie), weave in and out of reality, while reluctant permanent guest Lance (Tretheway) completes the idiosyncratic, deadly quintet. A genuinely creepy study in menacing insularity further elevated by Daniel Hildreth's contrapuntally pleasant acoustic guitar score, **Exhumed** rates as a relative obscurity that's well worth keeping on your digital radar. Wild Eye's DVD includes two commentary tracks, an interesting 47-minute making-of documentary, and trailers. ♂

—The Phantom