

Rob Freese's HORROR HARVEST

SCREAM FACTORY

(\$26.99 each Blu-ray/DVD 2-disc) 7/14
DEADLY EYES (1982) ♂♂1/2
 D: Robert Clouse. Sam Groom, Sara Botsford, Scatman Crothers, Lisa Langlois, Lesleh Donaldson, Joseph Kelly. 87 mins.

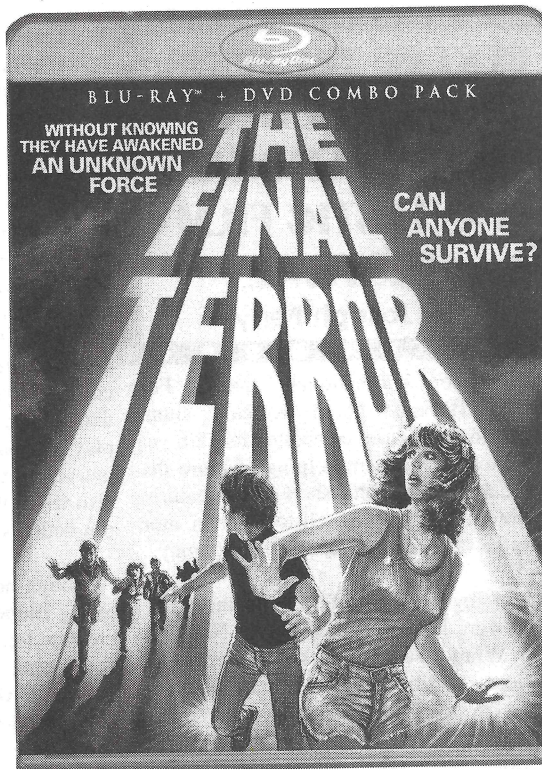
Grain contaminated by steroids is consumed by rats that grow to giant size and begin hunting humans in disgust. gnaw-outs that revel in some over-the-top gore scenes. Groom is a college teacher and basketball coach who falls for Botsford, a health inspector, and discovers the oversized rodents. The rat attacks start small, as we watch Scatman overrun and devoured in a tunnel, building to a hectic rat attack in a movie theater showing Bruce Lee flicks! The vermin invade the tunnel of a new subway line, and Groom races to save his gal pal and son from the flesh-eating beasties. This is a fun, gory giant-animals-amok flick that plays like a slasher film but substitutes the faceless killer with giant rats. It moves fast but also has its shocking parts. Early on there is an infant in peril and the outcome of this scene lets viewers know the filmmakers aren't playing games. The production used Dachshunds in rat costumes, which I've always thought was quite effective. (It sure beats CGI giant rats any day!) The Canadian cast is uniformly good, with many familiar faces from the slasher scene of the time, like Donaldson and Langlois, who both appeared in **Happy Birthday to Me** (VS #53). Director Clouse helmed a slew of kung-fu movies in the '70s, including the Bruce Lee chopfests **Enter the Dragon** and **Game of Death**, as well as **Black Belt Jones**. (He also contributed the highly entertaining gymnastics/martial arts hybrid **Gymkata** in 1985.) Clouse keeps the action moving and gets the best performances he can from his canine cast. (He worked with dogs in the 1977 Joe Don Baker dog-attack flick **The Pack**.) Extras include multiple interviews with the main cast in addition to writer Charles Eglee, art director Ninkey Dalton and special effects artists Allan Apone and Alec Gillis. This print sports the alternate title **Night Eyes**. The following year saw the release of the Canadian/U.S.-made **Of Unknown Origin** (VS #48), with Peter Weller and Shannon Tweed. (The '80s ended with the Canadian-lensed **Gnaw: Food of the Gods Part II**.) All in all, high-quality cheap thrills.

THE FINAL TERROR (1983) ♂♂1/2
 D: Andrew Davis. John Friedrich, Rachel Ward, Adrian Zmed, Mark Metcalf, Daryl Hannah, Ernest Harden Jr., Joe Pantoliano, Lewis Smith. 82 mins.

Junior forest rangers and female scouts find themselves lost and preyed upon by one of their own. As people go missing, they soon discover their campfire tale of a wild woman in the woods might actually be based on a real girl who was attacked and later gave birth to an incest-spawned insane offspring. This slasher-era "killer in the woods" flick appeared near the end of the late '70s/early '80s knife-kill cycle (the "golden age of splatter," as gore critic Chas. Balun once called it), although it was filmed years before and shelved for a time. Today, the talent before and behind the camera is impressive and includes early appearances by actresses Ward and Hannah and actors Zmed and Pantoliano. Director Davis went on to helm big studio action pictures like **The Fugitive** and **Collateral Damage**. It was produced by former AIP honcho Samuel Z. Arkoff. Compared to other slasher flicks of the time, **The Final Terror** is light on teen carnage but makes up for it with a cast of likable characters and a modest amount of actual suspense and tension that gradually builds to a more than satisfying climax. While the original elements could not be found to properly master this release, Scream

WILD EYE RELEASING
 (\$14.95 DVD) 6/14
INVASION OF THE SCREAM QUEENS
 (1992) ♂♂1/2
 D: Donald Farmer. 82 mins.

Brinke Stevens introduces this compilation of interviews with '90s-era scream queens, the actresses who made the then-burgeoning made-for-home-video horror/action market so much fun. Michelle Bauer kicks off the chat sessions with her recollections of first meeting director Fred Olen Ray and working on his terror flick **The Tomb**. Director David DeCoteau weighs in re some of the scream sirens he'd worked with up to the time his interview was recorded. Interviews with Stevens (who reveals she discovered science fiction, then Hammer films, at the age of nine), Melissa Moore, Ruth Collins, Elizabeth Kaitan and Vivian Schilling follow. Hammer heroine Martine Beswick talks about her stint on **Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde**, while drive-in legend Mary Woronov recounts the films she made early in her career with both Andy Warhol and husband Theodore Gershuny, up to working with frequent costar and on-screen partner Paul Bartel. Jannis Blythe recalls when she was part of the cannibal clan in Wes Craven's **The Hills Have Eyes** and answers some questions about the troubled follow-up. All in all, the disc contains 16 conversations of varying lengths and ends with a short Q&A with Monique Gabrielle. **Invasion** is



best suited for fans who fondly remember this grand time in terror-tape history. The scream queens made their mark not only in their low-budget films but on a personal level with fans who came to meet them at conventions and fan events from roughly 1990 to 1994, where the lovely queens of scream signed autographs and posed for pictures with enthusiastic devotees. The requisite merchandising included scream queen trading cards, comic books, model kits and specialty videos. It was a fun time to be a fan and this disc brings back all those memories. On a personal note, I would like to mention that many of these actresses took interest in their followers, and you probably wouldn't be reading these words had Brinke Stevens not been so kind in answering a ton of questions and helping me get my first writing gig 20 years ago. Thank you, Brinke. Thank you, ladies. ♂

