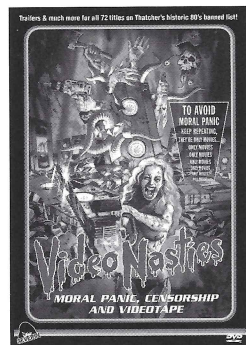


DVDementia

In the early days of home video, US mom-'n'-pop rental stores were always well-stocked with outrageous titles, but UK horror/exploitation fans had a much harder time satiating their schlocky needs after a few high-profile prudes blew a gasket over this new, unchecked "catalog of depravity." The end result was the banning of 72 video releases, with the 3-disc **VIDEO NASTIES: THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE (Severin)** providing an in-depth overview of this half-assed government overreach, beginning with Disc One's 72-minute, 2010 documentary **VIDEO NASTIES: MORAL PANIC, CENSORSHIP AND VIDEOTAPE**, an informative chronicle of infuriating, close-minded hysteria from director Jake West (RAZOR BLADE SMILE).

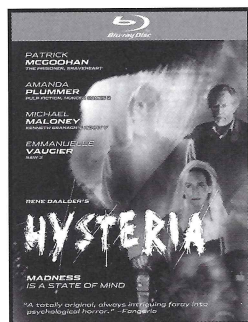
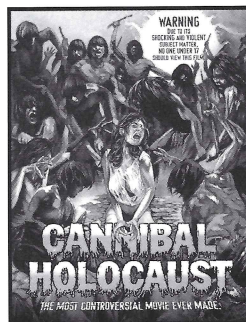


When pea-brained professional moralists like Mary Whitehouse blamed gross-out titles like *I SPIT ON YOUR GRAVE* for society's overall decline, the press and politicians soon leapt onto this alarmist bandwagon. Meanwhile, these "video nasties" (ironically, a term first made popular on an episode of *THE YOUNG ONES*) became more popular than ever — that is, until the Director of Public Prosecutions compiled a list of the most "depraved" films, seized tens of thousands of cassettes and began prosecuting retail shops. No surprise, the loudest proponents of this censorship never actually watched any of these films, with their fears rooted in a completely-bogus inquiry into the dangers of video violence on young children. Along the way, we get personal insights from directors Neil Marshall (*THE DESCENT*) and Christopher Smith (*BLACK DEATH*), *Guardian* film critic Derek Malcolm, plus Martin Barker, one of the few dissenting voices from that era. There are even recollections from Peter Kruger (head of Scotland Yard's '80s Obscene Publications Squad) and conservative politician Sir Graham Bright, who're still uptight, self-righteous pricks. Discs Two and Three contain the original trailers for all 72 banned films — 39 that were successfully prosecuted as obscene, plus 33 that were briefly banned but acquitted in court — each with an informative intro from genre experts like Kim Newman, Alan Jones, Stephen Thrower, Allan Bryce, and Brad Stevens. These two discs clock in at nearly 7-1/2 hours (!), as well as a terrific, 53-minute, A-to-Z "Video Ident-a-thon" compilation of '80s video distributor logos.

Speaking of Video Nasties, director Ruggero Deodato's once-infamous, now-classic 1980 gut-muncher **CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST (Grindhouse Releasing)** arrives on Blu-ray in a phenomenal two-disc edition, with a print that's immaculate, uncut, uncensored, and still pretty damned shocking. When acclaimed documentary filmmaker Alan Yates (Carl Gabriel Yorke), his girlfriend/script-girl Faye Daniels (Francesca Ciardi) and their two cameramen disappear after venturing into a region of the Amazon jungle known as The Green Inferno, a search party that includes wimpy NYU Professor Monroe (Robert Kerman) follows their trail deep into cannibal country. After running into

various primitive tribes, this expedition finally discovers the remains of the missing filmmakers, with the second half consisting of Monroe (the sole voice of reason) and TV-producers back at home reviewing the slaughtered crew's raw footage — a sickening chronicle of how these fame-hungry jackasses terrorized the natives, burned their huts, acted like savages, and got exactly the fate that they deserved. Sure, there's graphic disemboweling, decapitation, rape, flesh-eating, and assorted mutilation, but the film is also ingeniously constructed pulp equipped with a chillingly-prescient message about the public's thirst for sensationalism. Or, as one character deftly puts it, "The more you rape their senses, the happier they are." The set includes two commentaries — one with Deodato and Kerman, a second with Yorke and Ciardi (with Francesca genuinely perplexed about why so many people love this film) — trailers from around the globe, a massive stills gallery, plus a slew of cast and crew interviews totaling nearly *FIVE* hours! We're also offered an option of watching an animal-cruelty free version of the film, since its on-screen killings of a turtle, squirrel monkey, coatimundi, et cetera, are some of the most difficult sequences to stomach. On top of all that, the set includes a CD of Riz Ortolani's soundtrack and a 24-page booklet. Wow!

Equal parts horror film, love story and twisted allegory, 1997's **HYSTERIA (Cult Epics)** is a Canadian-lensed, abnormal-psych mindfuck courtesy of writer-director Rene Daalder (*MASSACRE AT CENTRAL HIGH*), with *THE PRISONER*'s Patrick McGoohan (in his final live-action film) at his most delightfully deranged. After his psychiatric hospital is closed by greedy corporate suits, Dr. Samuel Fry (Michael Maloney) needs a facility for prized patient Veronica (SAW II and IV's Emmanuelle Vaugier, in her first feature). She's a sultry but dangerously-unstable basketcase who, one minute, is stripping off her clothes, and the next, attacking our Doc with a corkscrew. This uprooted pair ends up at a remote, experimental institute run by the unconventional Dr. Harvey Langston (McGoohan), and it's immediately evident that the place is a veritable madhouse, with head wacko Langston gleefully taking a scalpel to his patients and using surgical implants to control his makeshift "family" — creating a collective consciousness that allows them to share the same emotions and sensations. Plus don't even *think* about trying to leave! Soon Fry is sucked into this looney bin's bad craziness and ends up falling for the wrong woman, with Amanda



Plummer making an appropriately offbeat addition as Langston's wheelchair-bound assistant, who can turn others into her dancing puppets. All of the performances have a wonderfully weird, over-the-top quality, with McGoohan tackling the meatiest monologues and looking like he was having a ball. Meanwhile, Daalder piles on the bizarre ideas and continually twists expectations — from a wild, no-house shindig with McGoohan maniacally pounding on conga drums, to their big 'group mind' sex scene — with its eeriness heightened by longtime Robert Altman cinematographer Jean Lépine (*THE PLAYER*). Occasionally resembling a melding of David Cronenberg and *MARAT/SADE*, this is a deeply warped mini-masterpiece with a hilariously disturbed edge. The disc includes a rambling conversation between Daalder and Plummer.

Inspired by the true crime tale of Alyssa Bustamante, a 15-year-old Missouri teen currently serving a life sentence for the 2nd-degree thrill killing of her 9-year-old neighbor, 2012's **MY NAME IS "A" BY ANONYMOUS (Wild Eye)** by writer-director Shane Ryan (*AMATEUR PORN STAR KILLER*) juxtaposes the vicious actions of this convicted murderer with two other screwed-up young women. Shot in only four days on a \$300 budget, Ryan ditches a straightforward narrative in favor of a more experimental route that's unstructured, highly creepy, but also compellingly intimate. Beginning several days before the murder, Alyssa (Katie Marsh) and her best friend (Demi Baumann)

hang out, talk trash about classmates, tease Alyssa's little brother, cut themselves, slather on make-up, and come off like typically bored, obnoxious teens. Their antics are intercut with two other seemingly-unconnected, troubled young women — a sexually-abused bulimic ("The Angst") and a Russian girl ("The Performer") who dreams of being a famous singer — with their painful cell-phone confessionals lending the 90-minute film a voyeuristic vibe, until the characters all converge at the end. The leads deliver nicely raw performances and Ryan deserves praise for his unique approach, even though it sometimes becomes so disjointed and self-consciously indulgent that the story's more damaged elements are nearly undermined. Despite these jarring shifts in tone — from corny and forced, to blisteringly brutal and real — it's altogether gripping. The disc includes two radically different edits of the film, *THE COLUMBINE EFFECT* (a 20-minute, impressionistic reworking of the footage) and *I HATE ME, MYSELF AND US* (a 57-minute cut that blurs the characters and builds to a more explicit conclusion), plus two Shane Ryan short films. *ISOLATION* (2003) is a 16-minute, atmospheric, depressing-as-hell portrait of teenage alienation, with 16-year-old birthday boy Billy (Ryan) wandering about town, haunted by thoughts of his deceased mother and hair-trigger-tempered dad. In the spooky and stylized 5-minute *ONI-GOKKO* (2012), two sisters confront the past via violence, blood and remorse.

