

### Another Mark

Having reviewed two DVD releases in Jan 99 and Nov 11, we figured we'd had our fill of the grossly violent **Mark of the Devil**, a 1970 film about power struggles during the Sixteenth Century that is loaded with torture scenes based upon the real instruments used at the time, and presented as graphically as the special effects will allow. Arrow Films, however, has released a Blu-ray (UPC#760137711995, \$40) with an improved picture transfer and a satisfying collection of supplementary features, so we decided to steel ourselves to the horror and dive into it once again. Running 97 minutes, it is specifically about an official who arrives in a small town and begins a literal witchhunt, and the conflicts he encounters with both the populace he wants to control and other officials. A humorless Herbert Lom stars, and Udo Kier is also featured. The film has a coherent political message, exposing the hypocrisy of the Inquisitors, who randomly apply their terror in order to sustain their authority—something that, unfortunately, still happens on one level or another even today (see **The Confession**)—but the narrative is just an engine to keep the film's momentum going, carrying the viewer from one stomach-turning sequence to the next.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1, providing more picture information on the top and bottom of the screen and losing nothing from the sides in comparison to the Blue Underground DVD. The picture is also sharper, and colors are brighter and more accurate, with less haze and grain. The monophonic sound is a little stronger on the BD, but the differences are minor. The BD also has a German audio track, however, and there are optional English subtitles, which the previous DVDs did not have.

The film's credited director, Michael Armstrong, who ran into some problems finishing the film, for which there are conflicting stories on the disc, supplies a commentary track. He did a different commentary track on the Blue Underground DVD that was more responsive to what was happening immediately on the screen, but that just makes the DVD worth holding onto in addition to obtaining the BD. His new commentary is still quite good, discussing the production, the story, the cast and crew, the reactions to the film over the years, and what he considers to be its artistic and thematic strong points.

As one of the experts interviewed in a very good 48-minute piece, about horror movies transitioning from moody scare fests to torture porn in the Sixties, Seventies and Eighties, explains, "**Mark of the Devil** is a legend, of course, an archetypal, sleazy, disgusting piece of exploitative horror, and it can be spoken of in the same breath as **Blood Feast**." The segment looks at many different films as well as **Mark of the Devil**, and supplies an excellent analysis of how one breakthrough in gore would spur on another.

Blue Underground's DVD had 34 minutes of retrospective interviews with the cast and the crew. The BD draws from the same material, but expands it to 82 minutes. Composer Michael Holm, for example, doesn't talk just about his work on the film, but discusses his whole career as a songwriter and German pop star, even singing a few of his hits, a cappella. The film may be grotesque, but everyone who worked on it has fond memories of their fellow cast members and the atmosphere on the set most of the time. There is also an enjoyable 12-minute profile of the distribution company that made **Mark of the Devil** an international hit, Hallmark Releasing (not the guys that do the greeting cards and movies you can share with your grandmother), a 7-minute visit to the locations used in the film, a terrific 3-minute collection of trims and outtakes, a trailer and a collection of promotional materials in still frame that is just as elaborate as the collection provided by Blue Underground, except that it does not include stills from the deleted zombie sequence at the end. A DVD platter is also included in the set.

### DVD News

**INDEX AVAILABLE:** Our annual Index to the DVD and BD reviews in The DVD-Laser Disc Newsletter, identifying all titles reviewed between Apr 97 and Jun 15, can be obtained for \$20 by writing DVD-LDN Index, PO Box 420, East Rockaway NY 11518. An addendum to last year's Index, covering all reviews from Jul 14 to Jun 15, is available for \$2.00. You can also receive a downloaded version of the complete Index for free. Just email [dpratt@dvdslaser.com](mailto:dpratt@dvdslaser.com) and indicate if you would like the Index in PDF format or Microsoft Word format. A complete set of Back Issues, from Sep 84 to last month, is available on two DVD-ROMs for \$64.95 plus \$3 S&H US, \$6 S&H foreign. Write to: Back Issues, DVD-LDN, PO Box 420, East Rockaway NY 11518

**NEW 1776:** Sony Pictures Home Entertainment is releasing a freshly re-edited and remastered version of **1776** overseen by director Peter Hunt. **Salt of the Earth** will have deleted scenes and a commentary. **Paul Blart Mall Cop 2** will have featurettes and deleted scenes.

**HORROR CLASSICS ON BLU:** Warner Home Video's Blu-ray release **Horror Classics Volume 1** will contain the Hammer Production version of **The Mummy**, **Dracula Has Risen from the Grave**, **Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed!**, and **Taste the Blood of Dracula**.

**LATEST FROM CRITERION:** The Criterion Collection release of Krzysztof Kieslowski's **Blind Chance** will have an interview with Polish film critic Tadeusz Sobolewski, an interview with Agnieszka Holland from 2003, and nine sections from the film originally censored by the Central Film Board in Poland. Bruce Beresford's **Breaker Morant** will have a commentary featuring Beresford from 2004; interviews with Beresford,

cinematographer Donald McAlpine, and actor Bryan Brown; an interview with actor Edward Woodward from 2004; a piece about the Boer War with historian Stephen Miller; and a 1974 documentary **The Breaker**, profiling the real Harry "Breaker" Morant, plus a 2010 statement by its director, Frank Shields. Beresford's **Mr. Johnson** will have interviews with Beresford, producer Michael Fitzgerald, and actors Maynard Eziashi and Pierce Brosnan. **The Honeymoon Killers** will have interviews featuring actors Tony Lo Bianco and Marilyn Chris and editor Stan Warnow; an interview with writer-director Leonard Kastle from 2003; and **Dear Martha**, a video essay by writer Scott Christianson, author of **Condemned: Inside the Sing Sing Death House**. **A Room with a View** will have interviews with director James Ivory, Pierce-Roberts, costume designer John Bright, and actors Helena Bonham Carter, Simon Callow, and Julian Sands; and a segment about Merchant Ivory Productions from a 1987 NBC television program.

**TWILIGHT TIME:** The latest Blu-ray release announcements from Twilight Time include **At Close Range**, **10 to Midnight**, **Fat City**, **Emperor of the North**, **Angel**, **John Carpenter's Vampires**, **Count Yorga Vampire**, **Scream and Scream Again**, **Strange Invaders**, **Black Widow**, and **Devil in a Blue Dress**.

**LATEST CINEMA ARCHIVES:** The latest releases from 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Home Entertainment's Fox *Cinema Archives* include **Joanna**, **The Killing Season 4**, **The Culpepper Cattle Co.**, **New Girl Season 4**, **Kid Blue**, **When the Legends Die**, and **Witches of East End Season 2**.

**LATEST ARCHIVE COLLECTION:** The latest releases from Warner Home Video's *Archive Collection* include **Banjo**, **The Clay Pigeon**, **Come Fly with Me**, **Criminal Court**, **Daktari Season 4**, **The Dark Horse**, **Doctor You've Got to Be Kidding**, **Eddie Cantor Goldwyn Collection (Palmy Days, The Kid from Spain, Roman Scandals, Strike Me Pink)**, **Five Came Back**, **The George Lopez Show Season 4**, **A Global Affair**, **Gypsy Colt**, **Honeymoon Hotel**, **Hugo the Hippo**, **Jericho Complete Series**, **Johnny Angel**, **June Bride**, **Lad A Dog**, **Quick Before It Melts!**, **Riff Raff**, **Satan Met a Lady** (previously available on the **Maltese Falcon** Blu-ray we reviewed in Oct 10), **Special Agent**, **The Sunshine Boys (Blu-ray)**, **Three Bites of the Apple**, **Two O'Clock Courage**, and **Wolfen (Blu-ray)**.

**NEW IN BLU:** The following titles have recently been released on Blu-ray—New Worlds (Acorn); Kumiko the Treasure Hunter, Monsters Dark Continent (Anchor Bay); Time Lapse (Anderson); The Cat Returns, McFarland USA, Spirited Away (Buena Vista); Daniel Bryan Just Say Yes Yes Yes, Nobunagun Complete Series, The Pope of Greenwich Village, Scarecrows, Sleepaway Camp III Teenage Wasteland, Soldiers, Tentacles/Reptilicus (Cinedigm); The Bridge, The Fisher King, Five Easy Pieces, Master Builder, My Dinner with Andre, Valerie and Her Week of Wonders (Criterion); Escape from the Bronx, The New Barbarians, 1990 The Bronx Warriors, Timbuktu (eOne); BlazBlue Alter Memory Season One, Fairy Tale V.4, Hoovey, Origin Spirits of the Past S.A.V.E., Ping Pong Complete Series, Soul Eater Not! Complete Series, Zombie? Season 2 (Goldhil); The Newsroom Season 3, The Wire Complete Series (HBO); Bank Shot, The Boys in the Band, Cops and Robbers, Enter the Ninja, The Escapees, F/X, Hard to Be a God, Harry in Your Pocket, Hero and the Terror, Inherit the Wind, Invitation to a Gunfighter, Judgment at Nuremberg, Killer Cop, Kings of the Sun, Land That Time Forgot, Le Pont Du Nord, Malice, Needful Things, Onion Field, Revenge of the Ninja, River of Death, The Sadistic Baron von Klaus, Sugar Hill, Tip Top (Kino); Beyond the Reach, Blindness/Proof, The Duff, The Forger, Last Knights, While We Were Young (Lionsgate); Serena (Magnolia); Back to the Jurassic, Survivor, Welcome to Me (Millennium); Camp X-Ray (MPI); Gett (Music Box); Be Good, Coffy, Fled, Foxy Brown, Friday Foster, Hammer, Malice, The Mean Season, She-Devil, Stone Cold, The Thing with Two Heads, Thrashin' (Olive); Hot Tub Time Machine 2, Project Almanac, The SpongeBob Movie Sponge out of Water, Vanilla Sky, Workaholics Season 5 (Paramount); Curse of the Dragon Slayer, Pound of Flesh (Peace Arch); Chappie, Blomkamp 3, Justified The Final Season, Red Army, Wild Tales (Sony); Killing Jesus, Kingsman The Secret Service, The Lazarus Effect, Unfinished Business (Fox); An American Girl Grace Stirs Up Success, Cahill United States Marshall, Danny Collins, The Decline of Western Civilization, The Gunman, The Who Live at Shea Stadium (Universal); I Am Evel Knievel (Virgil); Ranma 12 Set 6 (Viz); Dark Victory, Dodge City, Falling Skies Season 4, Focus, Get Hard, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, Jupiter Ascending (reviewed last month), The Last Ship Season 1, Miss Marple Season 3, Ninotchka, Ripper Street Season 3, Run All Night, The Train Robbers (Warner); Lupin the Third Castle of Cagliostro (WEA); The Taking of Tiger Mountain (Well Go USA)

### DVD and LD Ads

(All DVD and LD Ads are 50 cents a word. Deadline is 5 business days before the end of the month. Address all ads: DVD & LD Ads, The DVD-Laser Disc Newsletter, PO Box 420, East Rockaway NY 11518-0420.)

**DO NOT THROW OUT YOUR LDs!** Want to get rid of your old LDs? We'll be happy to take them off your hands, and can help with the shipping expenses. Please contact DVD-Laser Disc Newsletter at PO Box 420, East Rockaway NY 11518, call (516)594-9304 or email us at [DPratt@DVDLaser.com](mailto:DPratt@DVDLaser.com)