

DIM SUM DEMONS

MONSTER HUNT

Starring Boran Jing, Baihe Bai and Wu Jiang
Directed by Raman Hui
Written by Alan Yuen
FilmRise

Say what you will about *Monster Hunt*, the Chinese live-action/CGI mash-up that grossed nearly \$400 million worldwide after breaking box-office records in its native country. It's schmaltzy, chaotic, derivative and relentlessly engineered for maximum cutesiness. But it's never dull, and it comes with the notable distinction of being the first movie to successfully hybridize *Shrek* and TV's *Hannibal*.

Directed by veteran DreamWorks animator Raman Hui (*Antz*, the *Shrek* films), *Monster Hunt* is loosely inspired by *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, an ancient Chinese text that describes a bestiary of mythological creatures living in the mountains of China. The story concerns a goofball village mayor/wannabe swordsman named Song Tianyin (Boran Jing), who stumbles into a civil war in a hidden monster community.

In this case, "stumbles into" is a euphemism for "gets orally impregnated by a monster queen." After one of the weirdest labour scenes ever committed to



film, Tianyin becomes the proud papa of a monster prince called Wuba, a toddling bloodsucker who looks like a radish and is prophesied to bring peace to the monster kingdom. He'd also fetch a great price on the monster drumsticks market – in the film's imperial Chinese setting, the wealthy pay handsomely for the privilege of consuming fresh monster

meat at an exclusive eatery called the Heaven Restaurant. Tianyin must decide whether to sell his baby and become a professional monster hunter, or defy the Monster Hunt Bureau to protect the ambulatory salad topper that he so lovingly barfed up.

This 111-minute pageant of what-the-fuckery is skewed too firmly toward kids to be of more than a passing interest to adult horror fans. The creature design is carefully calculated to be as non-threatening as possible, with most of the monsters recalling the cuddly beasts of *How to Train Your Dragon* – only more, you know, vegetable-y.

But if you can make it past the sing-alongs and fart jokes, there are some pleasures to be had, most notably during the bonkers climax that combines wire-fu action, CG magic duels and some outstandingly ghoulish monster-cuisine kitchen prep. (Baby-monster brains taste best when spooned directly from the skull of the still-living infant, FYI.)

Monster Hunt is certainly not a feast for horror fans, but there's some tasty weirdness to gnosh while the kiddies gorge themselves on slapstick comedy and treacly pop songs.

APRIL SNELLINGS



OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE PICKS ON THE PARANORMAL

PRE-CURSER



PARANORMAL APPARITION

WVMM

I never liked the *Paranormal Activity* movies and grimaced at the thought of the inevitable rip-offs that would follow in their insipid wake. *Paranormal Apparition* would be a prime example of one of those ghastly rip-offs if it wasn't for the fact that it's actually a 2007 movie originally called *Cold Blood Canyon* that was repackaged and renamed after the *Paranormal Activity* films started raking in the coin, which makes it all the more abhorrent. When a girl tries to get rid of a ghost that's haunting

the house she just moved into with her parents, things go from bad to worse – especially the acting! Throw in some black magic and body swapping, and you've got a supernatural mess that not even an exorcist could clean up!

BODY COUNT: 4

SCARIEST PARANORMAL ACTIVITY: A bottle of nail polish is knocked over

NOT EVEN A GHOST OF A LANCE



PARANORMAL ISLAND

VMI Worldwide

A glance at the cover art for *Paranormal Island* could trick you into thinking that it might be half-decent, but you'd be extraordinarily wrong. There are no bloody skulls impaled on sharpened stakes, the girl on the cover isn't in the movie and – most importantly – it's not even set on a fucking island! In it, three completely unlikable douchebags get trapped after hours on a floating bar where a ghost wants to kill them, only instead of offing them right away, this irritating entity just kind of pushes

them around like your older brother in the backseat of your parents' car. Not even a salty cameo by Lance Henriksen can save this sucker from sinking straight to the bottom of delete bins everywhere.

BODY COUNT: 8, plus 1 rat and 1 dog

SCARIEST PARANORMAL ACTIVITY: The lights turn off

I SEE DUMB PEOPLE



CAESAR AND OTTO'S PARANORMAL HALLOWEEN

Wild Eye Releasing

The team behind Caesar and Otto has released a number of horror parodies in recent years, desperately trying to tickle funny bones like a modern-day Abbott and Costello but without the comedy skills. Their latest misadventure, *Paranormal Halloween*, is set in a haunted house that the duo is supposed to be looking after, although they're more interested in the hot neighbours and getting drunk. Despite the uneven performances and unfunny jokes, it's not a total loss due to a handful of cool cameos by scream queens Felissa Rose (*Sleepaway Camp*), Debbie Rochon (*Bleed*), Tiffany Shepis (*Night of the Demons*) and Brinke Stevens (*Teenage Exorcist*), who plays tantalizing twins straight out of *The Shining*. Silly, stupid and not at all scary, this is some pretty ripe cheese.

BODY COUNT: 14, 1 fly

SCARIEST PARANORMAL ACTIVITY: Levitating candlestick holder

LAST CHANCE LANCE