

Something Borowczyk, something blue

A Polish artist and animator who moved to France in the Sixties, made a few live action features, and even tried his hand at adult-themed filmmaking, Walerian Borowczyk was legitimately talented as a designer, but less accomplished when it came to writing about and working with real human beings, despite some deluded critical appraisal to the contrary.

Olive Films has released an excellent 144-minute compilation of Borowczyk's short films on Blu-ray, **The Walerian Borowczyk Shorts Collection** (UPC#887090134712, \$30), which showcase his talent at its best (as well as sampling some of the inclinations that led to his erotic ventures). The films have an impressive variety of styles and subjects, and embrace invention and abstraction with admirable flair. A few have scattered dialog, which is usually in French, and there are optional English subtitles. The films are appropriately letterboxed, which changes depending upon their age and manner of production. The transfers are uniformly excellent, with none of the wear or fading one sometimes comes across in even the best short film anthologies. The image is always crisp and the colors always feel accurate. The monophonic sound is consistent and clear.

The collection opens with a 1962 animated short, *The Concert*, which depicts the ink drawn images of a man and a woman interacting with objects, including one that is piano-like, as their forms are cut apart and reconstituted, or just left as slabs of meat. There are small touches of color. Set to a developed but seemingly piecemeal score, the film flows smoothly and is a blend of daring images and vaguely symbolic transformations. It is deliberately aggressive but still vaguely playful.

Shot in collaboration with Chris Marker, the 1959 *The Astronauts* is a complex mix of photomontage and manipulated cutouts, mixing black-and-white pieces with colored pieces, to a cacophony of sounds. It kind of shows a man inside a rocketship exploring an urban landscape, but the detail of the different objects and the wit of their juxtaposition is highly stimulating.

The haunting 1964 *Angel's Games* begins as an exploration of some sort of dark and confined interiors, which have ducts and dark corners and cylinders jutting from the walls, like a gas chamber. Mostly monochromatic, as the film advances, more objects and a bit more color come into view, and then there are revelations that sort of expand the parameters of what is being observed and why. Set to music that is best left revealed by the short itself, the film takes the imagination down some very interesting paths.

Our favorite film in the collection, the 1963 *Renaissance*, begins by looking at a pile of debris as gradually, through the magic of film and specifically reverse action, the sources of the debris are revealed. Set to a jaunty musical score, it may take a few seconds to figure out what is going on, but once it registers, the film is riveting as you wait for each new 'construction' with eagerness and glee.

The plain ink figure of a man expresses different states of being, from A to Z, in the 1965 *Joachim's Dictionary*. There are colors and other minor variations on the nature of the drawings, enough to make it feel like more than just an exercise, and the piece has a certain amount of wit, which is enough to fuel the anticipation of each segment.

Set to Richard Wagner's music, *The Greatest Love of All Time*, from 1978, is an expressive documentary piece that examines the art and technique of the painter, Ljubomir Popović, as he works on a canvass. His art clearly influenced Borowczyk's live action films, and especially his erotic movies (there is a segment that focuses specifically on how Popović paints nipples), and the film gives at least a snapshot of the artist's life and work. This is the one short where the quality of the transfer was questionable. Although fleshtones are essentially accurate, they seem bland, other colors look a little faded, and some sequences are not as crisp as most of the shorts seem.

The wonderful documentary short, *Diptyque*, from 1967, has, as the title implies, two parts. The first segment is outstanding, a black-and-white portrait of a 100-year old farmer who still works his fields and tends his vines, accompanied by a loving dog. The second part, in beautiful color, is a carefully deliberate montage of flowers and vases, with a kitten thrown in, for good measure. Each film would be terrific on its own, but there is something absolutely magical about combining them, even though they have nothing to do with one another.

Grandma's Encyclopedia, from 1963, is subheaded, 'In 13 Volumes,' but since its topics are only introduced with the letters, A (for 'Automobile) and B (for 'Balloon'), either the black-and-white presentation is incomplete, or Borowczyk ran out of energy. What exists, however, is quite impressive, depicting cutout photos of automobiles, and balloons, crossing classically detailed Victorian illustrations of landscapes and similar settings. This is the closest Borowczyk comes to the animation that would later appear as part of the Monty Python oeuvre (Terry Gilliam supplies a minute-long introduction to the Blu-ray), as it is accompanied by amusing sound effects and has a mildly humorous tone that disguises to a certain degree how meticulously it has been designed.

Set to a nice panflute score, the highly erotic drawings of Bona Tibertelli de Pisis are showcased in the 1975 *Venus on the Half-Shell*. The colorful drawings depict creatures that have both male and female organs,

mingling with one another or whatever it is they do. The images are colorful and Borowczyk's camera explores them vigorously. There are inserted clips of the artist, talking about her work and feeding mealworms to her pet lizard, which has a sensuality all of its own. Nevertheless, there is a slight but nagging feeling that Borowczyk isn't so much creating the film for the academic purpose of showcasing an artist as he is using it as an excuse to capture some bizarre sexuality on celluloid.

A live action 1967 short film, *Gavotte*, is set in the Eighteenth Century and depicts a dwarf attending a society function, interacting with a couple of other guests, arranging objects on a hardwood loveseat, and getting into a wrestling match with another dwarf. Although there are close-ups, the camera is basically confined to a single medium angle. Created by a mindset that finds dwarves to be funny because they are dwarves, viewers who do not share that humor will not think much of the short.

The 1967 documentary piece, *The Phonograph*, is a wordless look at how a cylinder phonograph functions, with the audio accompaniment combining the sound effects of the machine and the fascinating cylinder recordings.

Based upon a story by Guy de Maupassant, the 1966 *Rosalie* is a mostly static shot of an attractive actress, in period attire, standing in what is assumed to be a courtroom and explaining how she became pregnant and then disposed of the baby after it was born. Her monolog is intercut with shots of the 'evidence,' but the performance by Borowczyk's wife, Ligia Branice, is still very impressive and pulls the viewer through the narrative effectively.

Narrated by Yves Robert, the 1984 *Scherzo Infernal* uses a montage of drawings, some of them erotic, to tell the story of an outcast angel and an outcast demon who find one another.

Finally, there are two versions of a 1973 look at antique pornography, *A Private Collection Long Version Censored* and *A Private Collection Short Version* (where the censored segment is eliminated in its entirety). As with *Venus on a Half Shell*, the documentary film has an ostensible academic purpose, but is equally purposeful in presenting the images for prurient interests. Some of the objects are cleverly designed, and there is a basic atmosphere of humor to the presentation, but the porn is also quite graphic at times.

Also featured is a 28-minute retrospective piece about Borowczyk, examining many of the short films and a few of the features, including archival interview footage with Borowczyk and reflections by people who worked with him. It is said that Marker actually had very little to do with *The Astronauts*, and just leant his name so that Borowczyk could get a toehold in the French film industry, although the film's style suggests that Borowczyk took that sponsorship to heart.

Ostensibly a feature-length film, running 78 minutes, Borowczyk's **Theatre of Mr. & Mrs. Kabal**, another Olive Blu-ray (UPC#887090134-1218, \$30), is really just an extended collection of shorter films, linked with what one might call consistent characters, as the images morph from one idea to another. The 1967 production, which has scattered dialog in French and is supported by optional English subtitles, is a typical work of an animator attempting to expand his boundaries and experiment with extended action. It is, in fact, spun off from the first film in **Shorts Collection**, *The Concert*. The central figure is a domineering female with a hawk-like nose, whose form is constantly broken apart and then reconfigured. There is also a shorter husband figure, and a number of creatures—some recognizable, such as butterflies and snakes, and some just generic four-legged things with a body and snout. The backgrounds are minimal and the ink drawings are minimal, with rudimentary animated movement. Sometimes they are filled in with color, and sometimes they remain in black and white. There are also live-action inserts, often of women in bikinis, which sort of defines Borowczyk's orientation, despite the film's attempted thematic focus on a more universal view of male and female relationships. In any case, there is no appreciable narrative beyond the action within the vignettes. The dialog is incidental and abstract. The film's surrealism is energetic enough to hold a viewer's attention most of the time, but the animation really isn't as inventive or as stimulating as it is in Borowczyk's best works.

The picture is presented in full screen format, and the transfer looks crisp (the live action clips are vivid). The monophonic sound is a little harsh at times, but that is the nature of the recording.

Perhaps the most appealing of the feature-length Borowczyk films available on Blu-ray, the 1971 **Blanche**, from Olive (UPC#887090134514, \$30), is a tragedy, but much of it has a comedic tone that justifies whatever obfuscations arise in character development. The film also has star power. Set during the Middle Ages, an elderly but still wonderful Michel Simon plays the lord of a castle, whose very young wife has a mutually chaste romance with his son. The king comes to visit and attempts to sneak into the wife's boudoir in the middle of the night, only to have a blind altercation with the son. The king's page also falls in love with the wife and attempts to defend her honor, as the complications ensue until just about everyone dies. The humor comes from the depiction of how pathetic the Middle Ages were, from musicians who can't play music to the severe limits of luxury that even the wealthiest men must endure. The film's designs are excellent, despite the

Borowczyk (Continued)

limited budget, and are efficiently utilized. Running 94 minutes, the film's pace is a little uneven, but generally brisk, and whenever things start to drag, Borowczyk only has to cut to a close-up of Simon, or the lovely Branice, who plays the wife, and a viewer's attention is riveted.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1. While the film has an inexpensive look, which also adds to the humor of its setting, colors are very fresh. There are a number of extremely dark sequences, however, where it can be difficult to discern exactly what is going on, although that, too, has a purpose. The monophonic sound is clear, and the film is in French with optional English subtitles. There is a 4-minute introduction by Leslie Megahey, which suggests *Blanche* was the first film to show that, "You could do period drama on film 'differently,' although Pier Paolo Pasolini's *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* predates it, as do some of Roberto Rossellini's period efforts. Also featured is a good 28-minute retrospective interview piece that describes the creation of the film informatively, and suggests that, like Georges Méliès, Borowczyk was a master at blending the tricks of animation with live action.

A mostly black-and-white political satire that is less coherent or satisfying than *Blanche*, but still has a few inspired moments, *Goto Isle of Love*, another Olive Blu-ray (UPC#887090134316, \$30), is set in a make-believe land that is cut off from the rest of the world. While it takes some time for the narrative to become apparent, eventually it is about a lowly bootblack who schemes his way to power. Running 94 minutes, however, the 1968 film has strong similarities to the abstract orientation of Borowczyk's shorter films, and its purpose is more oriented to the impact of its individual sequences, many of which lampoon the social structure of an authoritarian environment. The film is quirky and intriguing, but can also be alienating if viewers are not ready to accept its premise or style. Pierre Brasseur stars, with Branice again, and Guy Saint-Jean.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1. Contrasts are sharply defined, and the very brief color inserts are vivid. The monophonic sound features Handel's Bach-like *Concerto No. 11*, and is smooth and sharp. The film is in French with optional English subtitles, and comes with a trailer, an 8-minute introduction by designer Craigie Horsfield, and 21 minutes of retrospective interviews that talk a little bit about what went into the shoot and a lot about how creatively the film was designed. One of his assistants also suggests that Borowczyk treated his actors like they were animated characters.

The film is also available as *Goto Island of Love* from Cult Epics (UPC#881190003794). The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback, looking slightly tighter on the top and bottom of the image in comparison to the BD. If one has not seen the BD, then the presentation looks reasonably good, but the image is softer and a bit more worn than the crisp BD picture, and after sitting through the BD, it is difficult to revisit the film with an even slightly inferior look. The monophonic sound is reasonably strong and there are permanent English subtitles. A trailer is included, as is a presentation of one of the shorts, *The Astronauts*.

Arrow Video has released Borowczyk's 1975 Polish adaptation of a Nineteenth Century novel by Stefan Zeromski, *Story of Sin*, on a DVD + Blu-ray (UPC#760137977285, \$40). The novel's plotting gives the film a viable momentum, there are some fleeting but appealing erotic sequences, and the film has a reasonably strong emotional content, but it also has limitations. Grazyna Dlugolecka stars, her character falling in love with a boarder in her parents' house in Warsaw. When the boarder leaves, she becomes obsessed with finding him, tracking him across Europe as other men fall for her, take advantage of her, or are damaged by her. Similar films, such as *Effi Briest* and *Tess*, succeed by fixating on the heroine, so that as the film is observing her travails, it is also savoring her image, her life and her inner spirit. But Borowczyk has too much animation in him. Sequences are too fragmented, and although Dlugolecka is in almost every scene, and even naked once in a while, there is never really an opportunity to take a breath with her, or to get more than a superficial read on what she is feeling. Running 131 minutes, the film's story has the sweep of a novel, and that is really the essence of its appeal, but it is a cold and calculated execution of the narrative that may be staged with accurate decor, but never achieves an organic feel for its setting or its characters.

Jerzy Zelnik and Olgierd Lukaszewicz co-star. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1. The image transfer looks good and the cinematography is often lovely. The monophonic sound is fairly strong and supportive of the classical music score. The film is mostly in Polish (it was Borowczyk's only Polish language film), with optional English subtitles. Along with a trailer, there is a good 8-minute analysis of Borowczyk's graphic designs by Andrzej Klimowski, a 7-minute look at Borowczyk's early blending of abstract graphic design with documentary newsreels that sort of works like an artistic short film itself, a 6-minute look at the cameras and other equipment Borowczyk used to make his designs and animated films, a terrific 24-minute interview with Dlugolecka, a decent 19-minute analysis of the sound editing and music in many of Borowczyk's

films, and a 12-minute montage of Borowczyk's cinema, summarizing the commonalities of his approaches and themes.

Four more Borowczyk short films are also included on the disc. One of Borowczyk's most accomplished animated works, the 1957 *Once upon a Time*, runs 9 minutes and uses manipulated cutouts to depict a changing variety of basic animal and human forms, essentially commenting upon the nature of the animation itself (they end up in an art gallery), as it also shows the figures exploring the world and culture, while interacting with other, increasingly complex cutouts. The film is accompanied by a somewhat incoherent commentary that talks a bit about how the film was made and what Borowczyk wanted to accomplish. A combination of many different methods, from live action to montage, and from to stop motion and manipulated cutouts, the 11-minute *Dom* could be interpreted as 'things going through a woman's mind,' as it cuts from different images to a recurring female presence (Branice again). It is accompanied by a commentary from composer Włodzimierz Koloński, who talks mostly about his own career and his experience scoring the film electronically. A wonderful 12-minute piece from 1957 about the history of posters and graphic design is entitled *Street Art School*, running 7 minutes, features a series of animated still photographs depicting a soldier standing at attention and shifting positions (a fly starts pestering him; he falls asleep and dreams of women's legs). It is accompanied by a commentary that talks about several of Borowczyk's shorts, as well as deconstructing the one at hand.

Finally, a commentary track for *Story of Sin* features two critics and Borowczyk fans, Samm Deighan and Kat Ellinger, who talk about his entire career and analyze many of his films, as well as placing *Story of Sin* in a proper context of both the source novel and Borowczyk's oeuvre. In their most insightful comments, they look at the film's social dynamics and explain that Borowczyk got past the normally prudish Polish censors because the novel was despised by the church and he was able to leverage the government's displeasure with the church to his advantage. They talk about the narrative and about the heroine's arc of growth, and draw social parallels between not only the narrative and the society it was depicting, but also the society in which Borowczyk created the film.

On the other hand, they tend, as many Borowczyk fanatics, or at least the ones showing up on the Blu-rays, do, to look upon his every artistic choice as an inspiration of genius and not, as one might elliptically put it, an inspiration of the raincoat. They even try to compare him, in a favorable light, to Tinto Brass, while denying the category to which all of the films by Brass and many by Borowczyk belong. Although it doesn't apply directly to *Story of Sin*, they do verbal somersaults to justify Borowczyk's eagerness in a number of his other films to savor eroticism. "As a female, and you'll probably agree with me, you've got this argument that the women are shown—and he obviously loves women's bodies in these films—naked a lot, and that's just a sort of a male thing, and it's just done for a male fantasy, but there's actually a lot of female fantasy in his films, and he recognizes women as sexual beings, and he sees that as a liberating force, but it's the way he goes about it. It's always a discovery, or women grow through their sexuality, or they're liberated from an oppressive family, or they evolve through sexuality, so it's not quite as simple as showing women masturbating for the sake of them masturbating."

The release of three of Borowczyk's adult films by Arrow with copious amounts of special features is still a worthwhile endeavor, so that viewers can pass judgment for themselves on the value of his output. Each film has been issued in a Blu-ray + DVD two-platter set. The films are in French with optional English subtitles, and on all three, the monophonic sound is fairly strong. Generally, the audio is so strong and the picture so adequate but unremarkable that there really isn't a noticeable difference between the BD and DVD presentations, and the special features are always replicated on both platters.

Probably the best example of Borowczyk's range is his 1974 anthology, *Immoral Tales* (UPC#760137782490, \$40), a collection of five separate pieces, running a total of 125 minutes. The first segment is a contemporary story which, as is underscored by the film's title, evokes the style and tone of Eric Rohmer...up to a point. Set near the French coast, two cousins ride their bikes to the beach, hike to a particularly remote area, and then make love. Stylistically, it feels very much like a Rohmer film, with calmly measured cuts, a liberating locale, and the youthful protagonists learning about their budding desires. Before you find out what you're really getting into, it is a promising start. But the boy turns out to be a sadistic jerk, and the girl is superficial in her responses. Where Rohmer would have found sweetness and perhaps a few charming complications, Borowczyk just sees manipulation and soulless exchanges. The negativity counteracts the nudity and eroticism so completely that the episode is a total turnoff and an auspicious indicator for Borowczyk's works as a whole.

The other four segments are in costume and are set at different periods in French and Italian history. The second episode is by default the most appealing. A young pious woman is punished for an imagined transgression. She is sent to an attic to repent, but comes across a book of pornography, and begins looking through it with the curiosity and intrigue of a

novice. And then, for lunch, they give her an uncut cucumber. The third segment is blatantly pornographic itself, and indeed was left out of the standard theatrical release, which is also available on the disc with a running time of 103 minutes, but in for a penny, in for a pound. A woman with an elaborate array of corsets and other undergarments follows a lamb into the woods, where she is accosted by a large ape-like monster with a permanent, ejaculating erection. Gradually, her clothing gets torn off. Reminiscent of anime porn such as *Urotsukidoji*, it's ridiculous, but it serves a specific purpose and it is nowhere near as alienating as the more realistic segment that opens the film. The fourth and fifth segments are similar enough that they can blend together in the memory, although the fourth seems to imitate the style and perspective of Pasolini, while the fifth segment seems to have been inspired by Federico Fellini. In the fourth segment, peasant girls who are of age are rounded up and brought to a mansion where they are bathed and trained by a female aristocrat (played by Paloma Picasso), apparently to become 'pleasure servants' of some sort, or blood donors. In the finale, a female Borgia exercises her power by providing satisfaction to different members of the clerical hierarchy, each of whom has peculiar tastes. Again, neither segment has the underlying feel for humanity that Pasolini and Fellini brought to their works, but the combination of nudity, period costumes and eccentric activities will give interested viewers something to stare at (in the fourth segment, he does manage to get about two dozen or more naked women to interact with one another within a single scene)—and you wonder what the stagehands and grips had to say about their day when they got home for their family dinners.

The presentation is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1. The picture quality shifts a bit from one segment to the next, but the color transfer looks fresh and sharp. A trailer is included, along with a dubious 5-minute introduction that attempts to persuade a prospective viewer to the possibility that the film has artistic merit; a good 17-minute retrospective interview with production manager Dominique Ségretin and camera operator Noël Véry; and a fine if somewhat defensive 63-minute interview with Borowczyk from 1985, in which he talks about his animated works as well as his films, and includes clips of both. He suggests, among other things, that animated works are sometimes judged only by how much work went into them instead of what they accomplish in expression, and that one cannot draw any conclusions about his own tastes from the sexual activities in his films ("I've seen many of your films and I think you're a big pervert.") "Listen, who isn't perverted? Our fantasies are identical to the consumer's. All I do is express everyone's dreams. I think it's wrong to judge that because someone speaks about drugs or makes films about the subject, then it follows that he's an addict."); and the segment that obligates a viewer to respect Borowczyk's inherent artistic talent, a 5-minute montage of his drawings, posters and other artworks that initially established him in Poland, though at the same time probably contributed to his need to escape to the West.

That optional segment about the hairy monster in *Immoral Tales*? Borowczyk expanded it into a 1975 feature film, *The Beast* (UPC#76013778-2599, \$40), and, surprise, pornographic inserts and all, it is the most entertaining of the three films. Although the clip in *Immoral Tales* was a costume piece, the feature film has a contemporary setting, and it is only in dreams that the heroine has dressed up in a historical outfit for her walk in the woods, to justify all the layers of lace and linen that the monster systematically tears away. Running 98 minutes, the film is about an arranged marriage that falls apart when the bride-to-be arrives at the mansion with her mother. Her fiancé appears to be somewhat of a simpleton, his father is desperately trying to get an important clergyman, who won't return his calls, to come and officiate the ceremony, and several other characters have different schemes and relationships going on. Unlike so many of Borowczyk's sex scenes, there is a running relationship between the groom's sister and a black servant that is not only erotic, but very sweet and charming—perhaps because it is only a subplot and not essential to anything except the film's lighthearted mood. While absurd and tiresome as a separate short, the 'beast' segment (restaged and trimmed down to a fifth of its previous running time) is adequately integrated in the narrative so that while it seems absurd, it is still in keeping with the other crazy things that are going on in the house, and is then fully justified in the movie's climax, when a startling revelation is uncovered. The film is no masterpiece or anything, but it is far less dreary than the other two movies and provides an adequate combination of sex, wit and creativity, which hold up well to multiple viewings.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1, and the color transfer is consistently fresh and crisp. There is a still overstated 2-minute introduction to the film; a trailer; an excellent 10-minute animated piece Borowczyk made in the early Sixties about the history of smoking; a terrific 2-minute animated fairy tale by Borowczyk with horrific imagery that turns out to be a commercial for pasta; an amusing 2-minute piece, also by Borowczyk promoting pasta, that is set in The Louvre, where the paintings go nuts for the noodles once all the visitors leave; an 11-minute short written by Borowczyk and directed by Peter Graham that is intended to convey the brutality of bird hunting but probably passes over the heads of its intended targets, along with a 5-minute retrospective interview featuring Graham about

making the film; a comprehensive 58-minute collection of silent behind-the-scenes footage narrated by Véry (although he speaks favorably of Borowczyk, one still gets the impression that the director tended to treat actors like animated figures, dictating their every stance and gesture); a 4-minute piece, with design sketches, about a proposed but unmade sequel; a terrific 13-minute look at Borowczyk's movable sculptures; and a nice 8-minute retrospective interview with several of Borowczyk's crewmembers attending a group luncheon.

Set entirely in the title character's enormous townhouse, where his alter-ego terrorizes his guests over the course of the night, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Miss Osbourne* (UPC#760137720898, \$40) was originally titled *Dr. Jekyll et les femmes*. Udo Kier and Marina Pierro star, with Patrick Magee in a major supporting part. Set in period costume, the film begins promisingly with some hot sex and an intriguing premise, which is, basically, that even when he has guests, the hero can't stop himself from going into another room and shooting up. Running 91 minutes, however, the film deteriorates after a while, as there is not enough story to keep things moving, and what story there is keeps shifting and jumping around—the guests are trying to fight the monster, but in a terribly disorganized fashion. The conclusion also shows a bit of promise, as the hero's fiancée loves him so much she's willing to do what she must to be with him. Nevertheless, Borowczyk may have some talent for atmosphere, but none when it comes to pacing and crescendo.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1, and the framing is often appealing, with effective gradations of color and design advancing across the screen. A number of shots are deliberately hazy, but on the whole, the good outweighs the bad. There is an English track—Magee does his own voice—along with the French track. A commentary is included that combines excerpts from a 1981 interview with Borowczyk and fresh interviews with other crewmembers and friendly critics. Along with some overstated praising of the film's limited artistry, you learn about how a sequence was set up and so on, and what the cast members were like, but generally, the track will only be of interest to enthusiastic fans.

Additionally, there is a fun 11-minute interview with Kier, as well as a sweet 10-minute retrospective interview with co-animator Sarah Mallinson about Borowczyk and animator Peter Foldes. A lovely 2-minute animated piece by Borowczyk (with Mallinson) from 1979, entitled *Happy Toy (Jouet Joux)*, depicts classically illustrated figures that look like images from a Nineteenth Century reader, performing simple, repeated motions. A 17-minute animated short by Marina and Alessio Pierro from 2012, *Himorogi*, is a tribute to Borowczyk, depicting objects manipulated with various forms of stop-motion animation. Michael Brooke is yet another British film expert who sees more in Borowczyk than meets the eye, but his 33-minute summary of Borowczyk career and additional insights on the making (and transferring) of *Dr. Jekyll* is so succinct and informative that you're willing to tolerate his enthusiastic opinions accompanying the facts. There is also an 11-minute interview with Alessio Pierro, talking about his inspiration for the film and explaining how its components reflect upon Borowczyk's spirit. Finally, there is a 7-minute piece about Borowczyk's use of techniques from the earliest days of moviemaking, with lots of representative clips; a good 10-minute profile of composer/sound designer Bernard Parmegiani; and a 15-minute montage of scenes from the film accompanied by text inserts that analyze Borowczyk's sense of design.

Heath Ledger

The mercurial Heath Ledger was always shooting his own footage on small digital cameras or phones or whatever you, and the producers of the very fine 2017 documentary, *I Am Heath Ledger*, managed to secure the rights to much of that footage, which they incorporated in a basic 94-minute biographical program that also features interviews with his friends, family and coworkers, and bits of footage from his big features. His own movies include journals, cinematic experiments, and then more sophisticated productions, such as music videos. Had he lived, there is no doubt he would have eventually tried his hand at directing feature films. The documentary sort of glosses over the troubles he had in life, but the compromise is worthwhile. Released by Virgil Films (UPC#829567125724, \$20), the film delivers a satisfying portrait not just of the arc that his career took, or the special nature of his art (he apparently had very little formal training), it explores the idea of 'fame' as a sociological and psychological force. As Ledger transitioned from an adolescent to an adult, his specific skills as an actor were continually enhanced by his experiences acting. The fame, however, dislodged his parallel maturation. It didn't suppress it, but it blinded him to the need for anchors, and he ended up channeling so much energy into the improvement of his art—which was continually impressive—that there was no energy left over to improve the other parts of his life.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.78:1 and an accommodation for enhanced 16:9 playback. The picture transfer is fine and the 5.1-channel Dolby Digital sound has a viable dimensionality. There are 8 minutes of very good deleted scenes, each of which adds more to your understanding of his personality, and a 3-minute portrait of a scholarship for actors that was created in Australia in his name. There is a captioning logo on the jacket, but no subtitle options.