

VIDEO VERITE

ELSTREE 1976 (2015) ♂♂♂

D: Jon Spira. Dave Prowse, Paul Blake, Laurie Goode, Jeremy Bulloch, John Chapman. 90 mins. (Film Rise) 6/16

A different kind of **Star Wars** documentary here. The focus is on the bit players, the extras, and the actors in the suits. The most prominent are Dave Prowse (Darth Vader) and Jeremy Bulloch (Boba Fett). The film is structured into three parts, beginning with the early lives of the subjects and how they got into acting, moving on to their experience appearing in **Star Wars** and its sequels, and then catching up on their lives afterwards, with particular emphasis on the convention circuit. There is a lot of fascinating stuff here, such as the discussions about the hierarchies and tensions that have arisen between the actors with face time, those whose features were obscured by masks, and those who were just a face in a crowded shot. Also striking: some footage where we hear Vader's lines delivered by Prowse. In fact, there is a bit of a lost opportunity with Prowse. While we hear about his work on **A Clockwork Orange**, no mention is made of his Hammer years, and this is an actor who played two different Frankenstein Monsters. So though what we hear from Prowse is terrific, a bit more would have been nice. Even so, the ensemble of stories is generally compelling, and the fact that even an extra can become someone whose autograph is sought out by convention attendees is an eye-opening testimony to the extent of the cultural phenomenon of **Star Wars**. A very enjoyable documentary, then, with very engaging subjects, providing a fascinating look into a relatively unexplored aspect of the film industry in general and of **Star Wars** in particular.

—David Annandale

JUST DESSERTS: THE MAKING OF "CREEPSHOW" (2007) ♂♂♂1/2

D: Michael Felsher. 90 mins. (Synapse Films) 7/16

A thorough and thoroughly entertaining account that can take its place beside **The Definitive Document of the Dead** (also from Synapse Films), Roy Frumkes' exhaustive inquiry into the genesis of George Romero's **Dawn of the Dead** (with detours into other aspects of the auteur's oeuvre), Michael Felsher's **Just Desserts** tells us everything we ever wanted to know about the making of Romero's Stephen King collaboration **Creepshow**. Brought together by their shared love of EC Comics' infamous gory graphic tales,

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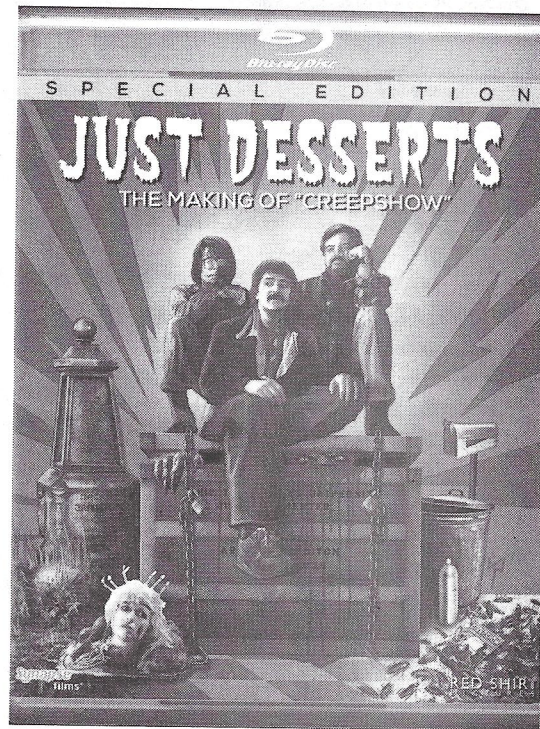
the filmmaker and author pooled their talents to conjure **Creepshow**, a lively 1982 anthology collecting a quintet of comic, sardonic stories framed by a 1950s-set wraparound. The film features an impressive mix of veteran thespis (E.G. Marshall, Hal Holbrook) and then-relative newcomers (Ted Danson, Adrienne Barbeau), along with **Dawn of the Dead** survivor Gaylen Ross and King himself, cast as a doomed yokel in the **The Lonesome Death of Jordy Verrill** episode. Felsher yields fascinating first-hand testimony from the always affable and insightful Romero, effects ace Tom Savini, actors Tom Atkins and Adrienne Barbeau, and dozens more. Synapse's Blu-ray contains a wealth of special features, including a Felsher commentary, a second track with actor John Amplas, property master Bruce Alan Miller, and makeup effects assistant Darryl Ferrucci, an interview with director of photography (and future **Creepshow 2** helmer) Michael Gornick, extended interview segments with Romero, Savini and artist Berni Wrightson (responsible for the inventive connective EC-style comic book panels), the documentaries **Behind the Screams, Horror's Hallowed Grounds**, and **Scream Greats Volume One: Tom Savini, Master of Horror Effects**, along with a 1982 **Evening Magazine** set visit, and more. Essential viewing for Romero, King and EC fans.

—The Phantom

RAY HARRYHAUSEN: SPECIAL EFFECTS TITAN (2011) ♂♂♂

D: Gilles Penso. 97 mins. (Arrow Video) 6/16

This loving tribute to the work of stop-motion effects master/filmmaker Ray Harryhausen was filmed over five years with Ray's full participation. After we learn how he got started in motion pictures, being influenced by Willis O'Brien's wizardry in the original **King Kong** and then working with the legendary effects man, each of Harryhausen's films is presented in detail, giving Ray ample opportunity to talk about how the project came to be, the rigors of filming the effects, the tricks of the trade and to reflect fondly on each production. Filmmaker Penso had full access to the Harryhausen museum of props and monsters, which adds an extra layer of "OMG!" for fans of Ray's incredible work. The list of talking heads who praise Ray comprises a veritable who's who of fantasy filmmaking and includes such luminaries as Peter Jackson, John Landis, Steven Spielberg, Tim Burton, Guillermo del Toro and James Cameron, among many, many more. Colleague Ray Bradbury is also on hand to reminisce about how the two dinosaur fans met and formed a lifelong friendship. Actresses Martine Beswick and Caroline Munro recall their time acting opposite Harryhausen-created creatures in **One Million Years B.C.** and **The Golden Voyage of Sinbad**, respectively.



The documentary plays to our love of these films, filling viewers' hearts with wonder, just like we felt the first time we experienced each of Ray's exceptional films. Keeping the focus on Harryhausen himself, telling the tale of his fantastic life first-hand, adds to our enjoyment as we take this journey in his own words. It's sad, too, in that Harryhausen has since passed, along with his brand of superior stop-motion magic. (Cameron says he feels that if Ray was still working, he would be embracing Computer Generated Effects, but in his own words Ray dismisses CGI and says he'd still be doing it the old-fashioned way.) The doc is loaded to the gills with special features, including interview outtakes, additional interviews with the likes of Rick Baker, Edgar Wright, Simon Pegg and Peter Lord, multiple Q&A footage from different festivals, commentary by Penso, a Harryhausen trailer reel and much more. A pure delight from start to finish.

—Rob Freese

BEHIND THE SCREENS

Elsewhere on the showbiz verite front, Kino Lorber contributes the two-disc set **Comix: Beyond the Comic Book Pages**, featuring Stan Lee & Frank Miller, and Virgil Films goes the **Back to the Future** restoration route with **Outatime: Saving the DeLorean**. Two veteran John Waters thespis receive separate feature-length studies: once and future "King of Baltimore B Movies" George (**Desperate Living**) Stover in **No Stopping the Stover** (Alpha Video) and formerly closeted '50s heartthrob Tab (**Polyester**) Hunter in Jeffrey Schwarz's excellent **Tab Hunter Confidential** (Film Rise), featuring interviews with Darryl Hickman, Robert Wagner, Clint Eastwood, John Waters, and Tab himself.