

to fly actors to and from the set! An Ormsby student film, foreshadowing *Deathdream's* political themes, is included, and the biggest surprise is a screen test with original Andy actor Gary Swanson (*Vice Squad*), who actually appears in the role in the opening 'Nam scene. Unlike Andy, this set will be a welcome guest in many homes.

MICHAEL GINGOLD

THE LEGACY OF ED WOOD

THE VIOLENT YEARS (1956) Blu-ray

Starring Jean Moorhead, Barbara Weeks and Lee Constant

Directed by William Morgan

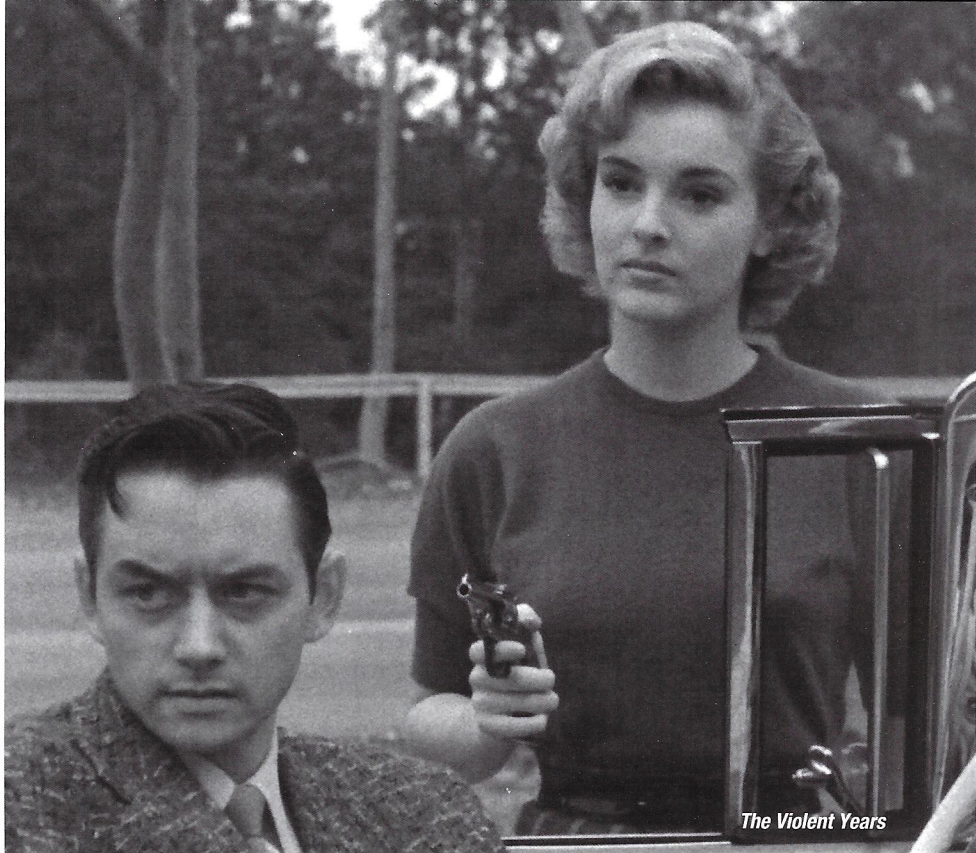
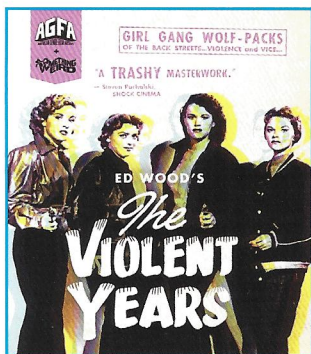
Written by Edward D. Wood Jr.

AGFA/Something Weird

Although *The Violent Years* lacks a rubber octopus, a grimacing Bela Lugosi, angora sweaters and flaming paper plates on wires, this Ed Wood Jr. scripted and produced wedge of pure fromage bears his signature dialogue and goofball plotting. The elliptical moral speeches overstay their welcome, but feel like blatant attempts to distract censors from a facile tale of gun-toting babes in torpedo bras (and quite lovely textiles, courtesy of local merchant Victor Most of California) making inroads to traditional punk male territories.

Wood's sordid saga of Paula Parkins (former Playboy hottie Jean Moorhead), a model high school student by day and a "So what?" girl gang leader by dusk, could be assessed as a crude feminist take on generic bad boy teens. Paula & co. commit robbery, murder, extortion, sweater theft, boyfriend rape, and destruction of school property (including the teacher's globe!). Although a marginally competent production, the real draw is Moorhead's strong performance as an angelic daughter who turns nasty on a dime, often transcending perfunctory tough dialogue.

AGFA & Something Weird's 4K restoration is razor sharp, but it also accentuates director William Morgan's poor sense of geography (the schoolhouse shootout is a mess), and cinematographer William C. Thompson's strange habit of fiddling with framing and setting up for a pan during an important take. *Violent Years* espouses to hit audiences with a message that's loopy but literate — be responsible parents, or see what monsters you'll unleash into the world! — and it's fun to watch Paula's crooked mentor Sheila (Lee Constant) quickly realize her protégé cannot be controlled. By the time police close in on Paula's gang, she's the only one left standing, albeit with a new responsibility she and her parents are banned from raising nine months down the road.



The Violent Years

Wood closes the film with weird statements on the noblesse of being "Godly" and how "children will profit from our mistakes," and AGFA has contextualized this cinematic career oddity with a commentary track featuring filmmaker Frank Henenlotter and Wood biographer Rudolph Grey, plus bonus feature *Anatomy of a Psycho* (1961). A delicious digression for Wood connoisseurs.

MARK R. HASAN

BLACKER CHRISTMAS

SILENT NIGHT, DEADLY NIGHT (1984) Blu-ray

Starring Robert Brian Wilson, Gilmer McCormick

and Linnea Quigley

Directed by Charles E. Sellier, Jr.

Written by Michael Hickey

Scream Factory

Ho ho ho! *Silent Night, Deadly Night*, 1984's notoriously naughty seasonal trash classic, finally makes the nice list in Scream Factory's lavish new Blu-ray. This yuletide slasher opens with young Billy Chapman, who sees his parents brutally murdered by the Santa Claus killer one Christmas night in the 1970s. This sets up a chain of events in which the young orphan grows up traumatized in a convent and, once reaching adulthood (played here by Robert Brian Wilson), is recruited as a toy store Santa. A festive killing

spree ensues.

Silent Night works best when at its sleaziest

(and silliest), attempting to cram in as much blood (and T&A) as possible into its scant 80 minutes. Despite the film's brevity, the plot still lumbers along, but it's always got good visual gags (young Billy punching out Santa Claus is a standout), energetic flashbacks, creative kills (death by Christmas lights, deer antlers, etc.) and even the retro joy of *Krull* and *Star Wars* toys on the shelves of the toy store in the movie. The mix of dopey humour and slickly staged kills create an off-kilter tone that's never dull, and helps to offset the wooden acting. Also notable is the music, which combines a mix of original holiday-themed songs with a fun, dissonant score from Perry Botkin.

Scream Factory's new 4K transfer, taken from the original camera negative, showcases how colourful the original film was, despite a few scratches. Also available is the unrated cut, which incorporates low-res footage of some of the more graphic murders. Fans of the film will enjoy Scream Factory's new extras, which include an interview with scream queen Linnea Quigley, and an in-depth retrospective that speaks to the film's comedic tone, and explores the public outcry that shelved the film after only a few weeks in theatres, despite fuelling a five-film franchise of diminishing returns.

JEFF SZPIRGLAS

