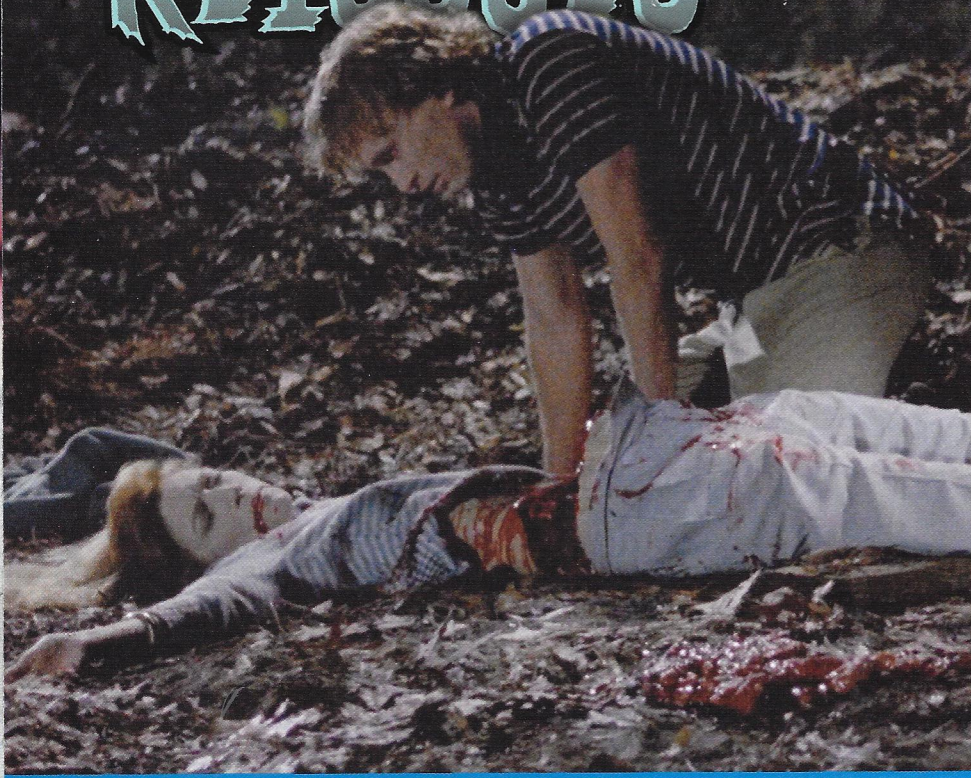


## REISSUES



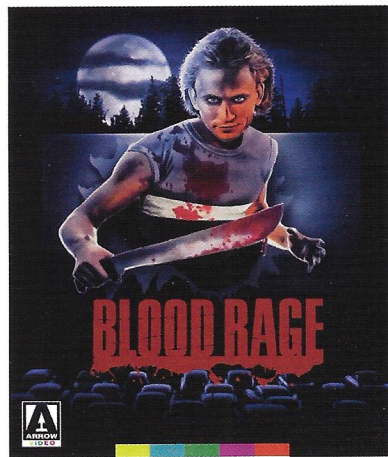
## DON'T FRAME ME, BRO!

## BLOOD RAGE (1987) Blu-ray

Starring Louise Lasser, Mark Soper and Marianne Kanter  
Directed by John Grissmer  
Written by Bruce Rubín  
Arrow Films

Made in 1983 but released in 1987, when the slasher boom was all but lying dead on the floor, *Blood Rage* is a nostalgic slice of '80s video store schlock. Rather than just being a carbon copy of the subgenre's finest hits, however, it reworks those abundant clichés and tropes with a spirited energy.

Beginning in 1974 at a drive-in movie, identical twins Todd and Terry (both played by Mark Soper) wander off, leaving their parents to make out in the front seat. A teen is murdered, Todd wrongly takes the rap and he's locked away in an asylum where his protestations of innocence are ignored until he becomes so despondent as to be rendered catatonic.



Meanwhile, Terry lives with their mother, who showers him with love. When Todd escapes at Thanksgiving, Terry goes on a killing spree in order to make it look like his brother's still the murderer so he'll get locked back up for good. His first target is mom's fiancé, Brad, who meets the bad end of a blade. As the bodies pile up, it's up to Todd to stop him.

The amusing premise of *Blood Rage* works as a reversal of the *Halloween* set-up. Instead of the psycho coming home to slay a gang of teens, the hero returns to right a wrong and fight it out with a killer hiding in plain sight as a goody two-shoes.

The characters are engagingly written by Bruce Rubín, a screenwriter who would go on to pen *Jacob's Ladder* (1990) and *Ghost* (1990), and the performances are above average. Louise Lasser, especially, is in good form as the loony mother.

The gore effects may be Z-grade lousy, but don't let that put you off. *Blood Rage* is a smart slasher. The ample bonus material on Arrow's three-disc edition make this

clear, with extensive cast and crew interviews, director commentary, a visit to filming locations, essay by Joseph A. Ziemba (author of *Bleeding Skull! A 1980s Trash-Horror Odyssey*), three different cuts of the film to compare and contrast, and more.

*Blood Rage*, by virtue of its personality-swapping premise, seems to foretell the body-/identity-swap comedies of the 1980s, which is just one of many reasons this one's an essential '80s oddity.

MARTYN CONTERIO

## RAISED WRONG

## SONNY BOY (1989) Blu-ray

Starring David Carradine, Brad Dourif and Paul L. Smith  
Directed by Robert Martin Carroll  
Written by Graeme Whiffler  
Scream Factory

Every cult film fan knows the feeling of taking a chance on a relatively unheard-of movie and then discovering a total gem, and then, furthermore, the joy of introducing friends to it. *Sonny Boy* fits this definition perfectly: it boasts David Carradine in drag, Brad Dourif as an '80s punk/crime lackey and more gun violence than you can shake a stick at — all wrapped in an uncharacteristically saccharine soundtrack and a serious message about child abuse.

Somewhere in New Mexico, deep in the desert, Weasel (Dourif) has stolen a beautiful car to bring to his boss

Slue's junk lot in the middle of nowhere. Slue is fairly uninterested in what Weasel has brought him, but his trans wife Pearl (Carradine) quickly notices that there's a precious baby in the backseat, which she immediately

decides will be kept as her own and named Sonny. Although Slue initially resists, they keep the child, and at the tender age of six decide to cut his tongue out and raise him as a hardened criminal. Add to this the boy's barbaric living conditions and he turns feral, eventually escaping and wreaking havoc by breaking into buildings, scaring townspeople and leaving a bloody mess in his wake.

*Sonny Boy* offers far more than a few giggles at the antics of its characters; it's an unexpectedly tender story that explores the pains of child abuse. Alongside fantastic performances from not only Carradine, Smith and Dourif, Michael Griffin is brilliant in his first role as Sonny, using inhuman body movements to create a sympathetic, interesting character.

*Sonny Boy* is a truly strange story of heart-

