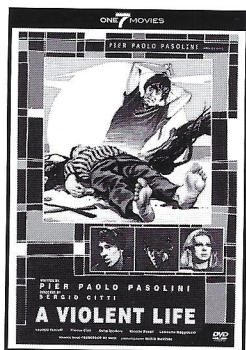


thought-provoking and a bit of a hodgepodge. When thieving siblings Bandiera (Laurent Terzieff, from Buñuel's *THE MILKY WAY*) and Rabbino (Franco Citti, younger brother of director Sergio, best known as *THE GODFATHER*'s Sicilian body-guard Calo) discover catatonic Monica (Anita Sanders, star of Tinto Brass' *NEROSUBIANCO* and wife of Franco Citti) in a field, they haul her back to their home. But while their rowdy friends (including Ninetto Davoli, Pasolini's former teenage lover) have their way with this oddly passive blonde, the brothers show little interest and later move her onto the floor in order to make room in bed. As Monica recovers from a recent trauma,



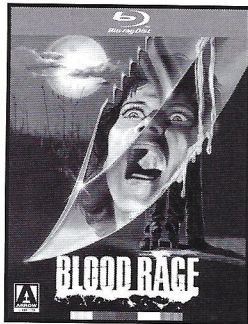
the brothers reluctantly allow her to stay, with the three-some playing kinky dress-up, visiting a filthy beach and confessing their mutual father issues. Via flashbacks, we see Monica taken advantage of by her papa (Lamberto Maggiorani, star of *THE BICYCLE THIEF*); and the brothers, as children, shove their drunken asshole dad out of a window and to his death after he butchers their beloved pet sheep. When Bandiera and Rabbino are eventually arrested for petty crimes and share the same cell, antagonism slowly grows over Monica, until one sudden impulse destroys their lives. Laced with cryptic monologues, heavyhanded Communist agitprop, radical shifts in tone, making light of Catholic traditions, plus a smidgen of homoerotic subtext, the storytelling is confusing and disjointed, but the performances keep us intrigued, particularly steamy and spontaneous Ms. Sanders. Citti's lifeless direction doesn't add much to this over-baked story, but the widescreen cinematography captures the region's seedy bleakness and beauty, with future events (five years later, Pasolini would be brutally murdered in Ostia, with his body found along this same stretch of beach) giving the entire project a distinctly bittersweet aftertaste.

New to Blu-ray, the 1978 exploitation classic **FELICITY** (Severin) invites the viewer along on the sensual awakening of an innocent abroad. Australian director John D. Lamond keeps the backdrop exotic and the classy proceedings punctuated with softcore sex 'n' skin — opening at a Catholic-nun-operated UK boarding school populated by nubile young ladies who spend most of their time showering or skinny-dipping. But while 17-year-old Felicity Robinson (Canadian actress Glory Annen) takes men's leering and mild groping in cheerful stride, this poor girl has no actual experience with sex. That's all about to change after she receives a ticket to Hong Kong for the holidays, where she'll stay with friends of the family. Following a make-over shopping spree (complete with a montage of Felicity trying on skimpy lingerie, which even arouses the poofy sales clerk) and decidedly-unromantic loss of her virginity (getting her cherry popped atop a car bonnet by a creepy gigolo), our curious tourist is shown the region's randier hotspots by Me Ling (Joni Flynn), as Lamond mixes local color with erotic vignettes, including a visit to a floating "Chinese house of pleasure." Accosted by thugs and rescued by handsome Aussie bloke Miles (Christopher Milne), Felicity finally discovers the film's central message: that *liking* the person you're boffing is preferable to anonymous sex. Also, *any* proper young woman can apparently become an insatiable

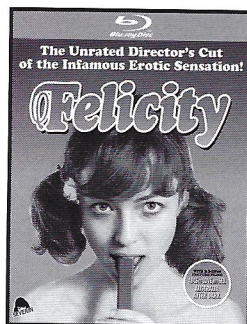
nymphomaniac. In Felicity's case, she's soon going down on Miles in the middle of a crowded movie theatre and fucking him on a public streetcar. Annen (in reality, 26 years old) nails the innocent, schoolgirl-next-door routine, as she casually wanders about naked, peeps on couples screwing and (in voiceover narration) discusses the "warm tingling in my most secret place."

The rest of the cast is photogenic but merely serviceable. Although it never pushes the envelope in terms of raunchiness, this is still a solid bet for anyone nostalgic for '80s-era Cinemax fare. The Blu-ray includes a commentary by Lamond and Annen; two bonus feature films [both reviewed in SC#42], Lamond's 'educational' docs *ABC'S OF LOVE & SEX*, *AUSTRALIA STYLE* and *AUSTRALIA AFTER DARK*; plus outtakes of Lamond, Annen and cinematographer Gary Wapshot from Mark Hartley's *NOT QUITE HOLLYWOOD*.

Shot in 1983 but not released until four years later, director John Grissmer's **BLOOD RAGE** (Arrow) is an unquestionable piece of crap. Nevertheless, this old-school slasher quickly wins us over with its offbeat ineptitude and outlandishly gory agenda, beginning with a 1974 prologue set at a drive-in movie theatre. While their mother Maddy (Louise Lasser) is busy making out with a date, her two young twin sons sneak out of the car, evil little Terry inexplicably takes a hatchet to a man's face and blames the bloodshed on innocent brother Todd. Ten years later, Todd (Mark Soper) is an institutionalized mess, while secretly-psychopathic Terry is free to flirt with pretty girls (including Julie Gordon as girlfriend Karen) and be a snide jerk. On Thanksgiving, harmless Todd escapes from his hospital and wanders back home; Terry begins slaughtering friends and

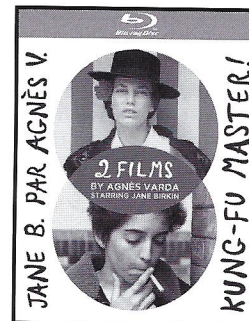


neighbors around his Shadow Woods apartment complex; and Maddy gets ripped and has a complete breakdown. That's about it for the plot, folks. But boy, is it excessively bloody! In this uncut print, we get graphic beheadings, skewerings, chopped off appendages, and a woman cut in half at the waist, as well as the requisite gratuitous shower scene and '80s synth-score. Lensed six years after starring in the acclaimed Norman Lear sitcom *MARY HARTMAN, MARY HARTMAN*, Lasser legitimately *tries* to act but also seems vaguely confused by this pathetically low-rent gig. Ironically, since her character is *supposed* to be losing her marbles, looking clueless sorta works. Meanwhile, Soper plays an 18-year-old yet looks closer to 30, with his dual role giving him twice the opportunity to suck. Plus look for Ted Raimi during the opening sequence (filmed at New Jersey's Route 35 Drive-In), making his fleeting acting debut as a Men's Room condom salesman. The three-disc DVD/Blu-ray set is packed with extras, including individual interviews with Soper, Raimi, producer Marianne Kanter, and Lasser; a director's commentary; nearly a half-hour of silent out-



takes; a recent visit to its Jacksonville, FL locations; and best of all, the film's edited theatrical release, *NIGHTMARE AT SHADOW WOODS* (trimmed of gore but with a couple additional dramatic scenes, such as the teens frolicking at the community pool), as well as a composite cut.

Arriving in a two-disc Blu-ray set, arthouse legend Agnès Varda's 1988 duo, **JANE B. PAR AGNÈS V.** and **KUNG-FU MASTER** [*Le Petit Amour*] (Cinelicious Pics), are both relatively minor works from the director of *CLEO FROM 5 TO 7* and *VAGABOND*, yet provide a splendid showcase for the limited talents of English actress, singer and overpriced-handbag-namesake Jane Birkin. *KUNG-FU MASTER* is a melancholy, conventionally-structured drama with a controversial subject — the love story between a 40-year-old woman and a 14-year-old boy — and though obviously an extremely personal project for Birkin (it's based on her own idea, shot in and around her actual home and co-stars several family members), the film ends up shallow and obnoxious. While holding an afternoon party for her teenage daughter Lucy (Charlotte Gainsbourg, Birkin's daughter with longtime partner Serge Gainsbourg), mother Mary-Jane is strangely drawn to runty schoolboy Julien (Mathieu Demy, Varda's son with director Jacques Demy), who initially seems more preoccupied with an 8-bit videogame titled *KUNG FU MASTER*. Soon Mary-Jane is accompanying him to arcades, staring at the boy creepily and inviting him along on their family vacation to London (featuring Birkin's actual parents). Finally getting some alone time with him at the seaside, they make out, share a sleeping bag and declare their love for each other. Though



played with utmost earnestness, the whole thing feels hollow. Julien tries (and fails) to act older, Mary-Jane wants to relive her youth and freedom, and the film sidesteps the consequences when they're finally caught. There's also a heavyhanded thread about AIDS, with the subject continually mentioned (e.g., children's rude jokes, a Fry and Laurie skit, abrasive street pamphleteers). Despite naturalistic performances and some pretty cinematography, it's as insipid as your average Lifetime movie... *JANE B. PAR AGNÈS V.* is far more playful and imaginative, though just as self-indulgent. A free-form portrait of Birkin, filtered through Varda's avant-garde sensibilities, it opens with Jane meeting Agnès at a café and reluctantly agreeing to this project. Briefly touching upon her life story, as well as giving us a tour of her home and confessing her conflicting desire for both fame *and* normalcy, the film is also interspersed with fictional vignettes: Birkin plays an art dealer battling one of her clients (Philippe Léotard) over cash; having a picnic with Jean-Pierre Léaud; as an old woman scattering her husband's ashes; plus a black-and-white segment with Jane playing a Stan Laurel-type and a bakery pie fight climax. Along the way, Birkin dresses up in various costumes and wigs, playing Joan of Arc and Calamity Jane, amidst different period settings; grizzled Serge Gainsbourg shows up to help her record a song; Varda goes on-camera to explain her fascination with Jane, with the pair discussing their upcoming *KUNG-FU MASTER* project; until it all devolves into a cryptic, artsy mess lacking any deep insights. Each disc contains a Varda interview.