



QUEUED UP

BY BRYAN REESMAN

SOCIETY (1990)

The set up: Beyond coping with typical teen hierarchy and his demanding socialite girlfriend, Beverly Hills High student Bill Whitney (future *Baywatch* co-star Billy Warlock) suspects socially devious and even incestuous machinations between his snooty parents and vain sister. He soon uncovers a conspiracy among his wealthy circle of friends and family to prey quite literally upon the poor.

The breakdown: The producer of the infamous *Re-Animator* and

Return Of The Living Dead, Brian Yuzna made his directorial debut with this gruesome, Lovecraft-like tale of aristocratic privilege culminating in one of the weirdest orgy sequences ever filmed, in which flesh literally melds into flesh. *Society* is well shot and decently acted in a deliciously '80s style, and it is certainly not subtle. Arrow Films have spared no expense with this special edition, which is limited to 5,000 units and includes bonus featurettes covering different



aspects of the production, vintage interview footage with Yuzna, and a comic book sequel all wrapped up in an awesomely gruesome package.

THE SAINT: THE COMPLETE SERIES (1962-69)

The set up: Suave, international man of adventure and thievery Simon Templar (Roger Moore) helps friends and various officials solve crimes. He handles himself in brawls, romances damsels in distress, and pockets criminal funds for himself. Templar collaborates at times with Inspector Teal, who still views him as a criminal no matter who he helps.

The breakdown: Along with *The Avengers*, *The Saint* was one of the longest running British TV

series of the '60s and ran for six seasons, switching over to color for the last two. Moore got to practice plying the rogue-ish charm here that would benefit him in the seven subsequent James Bond movies he would make between 1973 and 1985. As Simon Templar, he portrayed the kind of cultured, well-mannered, yet rough and tumble hero that was the ideal of his day but given a criminal twist. Despite his thieving predilections, he was loyal and kind to his friends. The



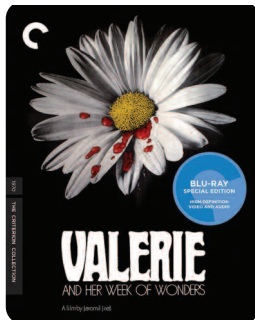
series combined set pieces with on location shooting for his many adventures, which are modest compared with some of today's shows, yet that is exactly why they remain so charming. And let's not forget the famed theme song!

VALERIE AND HER WEEK OF WONDERS (1970)

The set up: While living with her stern grandmother, 13-year-old Valerie (Jaroslava Schallerova) copes with her blossoming sexual impulses, feelings for a boy who may or may not be her brother, the lecherous advances of the parish priest, and the evil intents of a vampiric clergyman, who restores her grandmother's youth at a dangerous cost. Her story moves with a dream-like surreality throughout her tumultuous cavalcade of experiences.

The breakdown: Part of the

Czech New Wave of the 1960s of which it marks the end, *Valerie...* explores various facets of teen sexuality, religious repression, and the tribulations of adulthood. The gorgeous cinematography is an asset as the pace occasionally lags, but director Jaromil Jires knows how to serve up provocative images without making the occasional nudity feel exploitative. The interviews from cast members today reveal some of the difficulties and backhandedness involved in



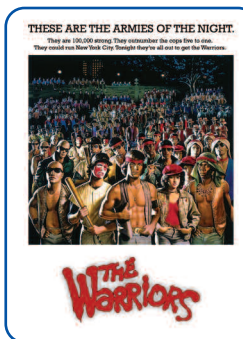
making the film, which certainly would not likely be made today. It's certainly an original.

Netflix Fix:

THE WARRIORS (1979)

Walter Hill's revered action movie caused quite a stir with its provocative poster and reports of violence breaking out in some theaters upon its release. *The Warriors* was part of a gritty wave of 1970s films in which we identified with anti-heroes, for better or worse. Here, the titular Coney Island crew find themselves on the run from police and every gang in the city when they are framed by rivals for the assassination of gang kingpin

Cyrus at a mass gang summit in the Bronx. Over the course of an evening, they fend off attacks, run for their lives, and try to figure out how to clear their name. It's a simple premise pumped up with some effectively staged surprises, a percolating, synthesized rock score, and a bit of social commentary. While some of the gangs almost look comical by today's standards, you wouldn't want to face them down on a deserted city street



at 3 AM. Luckily, you can just watch the chaos unfold in the security of your home. Can you dig it?

THE BAD OLD DAYS OF NYC

The gentrified Manhattan of today is miles beyond the grimy, gritty New York City from the crime-ridden 1970s and 1980s. Rundown areas of many boroughs made for great movie locations, particularly parts of Brooklyn and the Bronx, and visually enhanced film stories shot there.

Based on a Whitley Strieber novel, the supernatural thriller *Wolfen* (1981) ties together murders of a bum in the Bronx and a rich Wall Street developer as mysterious beings in the former borough may be defending their dilapidated turf from human encroachment. Albert Finney,

simulate animal vision.

Playing like a cross between *The Warriors* and *The Wiz* (without the singing and dancing), *1990: The Bronx Warriors* (1982) also depicts a decaying urban landscape in a future where



that borough has become a lawless zone overrun by cartoonish, warring gangs. But the rivals must try to band together when a rich CEO's daughter, who escapes from Manhattan to slum it with pretty boy Trash and his biker crew, invites a mercenary manhunt (cue a super hammy Fred Williamson, as the gang overlord, kicks ass when he is on screen. There is some great cinematography to compensate, and they've got flame throwers for the climactic raid!

Topping the list of this retro



Diane Venora, and Gregory Hines investigate the killings, while a young, (in the buff) Edward James Olmos offers hints about the wolfie goings-on. Well directed by Mike Wadleigh of *Woodstock* fame, *Wolfen* is creepy and features great Steadicam work and a thermographic-like effect to



trio is John Carpenter's *Escape From New York* (1981), which is getting a needless Hollywood remake. In then-future 1997, Manhattan is a maximum security prison run by the inmates, and the plane of the President (Donald Pleasance) has crash landed there. If he can get him out in 24 hours, in time to make a critical broadcast that could prevent World War III, hardened convict Snake Plissken (Kurt Russell) wins his freedom. That is easier than it sounds, with roaming criminals, crazed scavengers, and the badass Duke of New York (Isaac Hayes) standing in the way. Unlike the other two films on this list, the street scenes were shot in a fire-damaged area of St. Louis, Missouri, and except for the Liberty Island scenes, the rest were shot on sets in L.A. But clearly the decay of NYC was an inspiration, and *Escape From New York* has become a film that deserves its coveted cult status.

THE SPONGEBOB MOVIE: SPONGE OUT OF WATER (2015)

The set up: After the greedy Plankton (Mr. Lawrence) tries to steal Mr. Krab's secret (and lucrative) formula for the ever-addictive Krabby Patty, it disappears into thin air as he and SpongeBob SquarePants (Tom Kenny) tussle over it. With the town of Bikini Bottom plunged into post-apocalyptic despair over the loss of their main food source, the two frenemies set out to find the secret formula and save the underwater community. Naturally, this involves time travel and an eventual journey to the surface thanks to the aid of a talking, laser-shooting

dolphin from the future. Oh yes, a live action pirate (Antonio Banderas) narrates the story and becomes a part of the plot. Trust me, it will make sense when you see it.

The breakdown: It's been 11 years since the last SpongeBob movie, and director Paul Tibbit and writers Glenn Berger and Jonathan Aibel have pulled out all the stops, cramming the movie full of pop culture gags, psychedelic time travel imagery, and a giant superhero mash-up on land during the finale. The final third of the movie features 3D animation within



live action as our heroes and friends face down the crusty pirate on a beach town, and the choreography of the colossal showdown is impressive. It's a bit over-the-top like all other event movies today, but it's still got charm and a few racy jokes for adults. The look inside SpongeBob's brain—literally, Candyland on acid—is worth the plunge alone.