



THE GORE MET

MENU: MEAN CUTS OF MEAT FROM ARROW

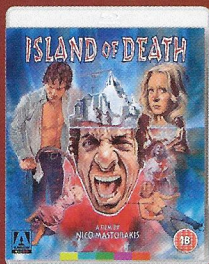


Over the past few years, one of the best reasons to buy an all-region Blu-ray player was the UK company Arrow Films. In 2012, the home video imprint moved away from licensing video masters from other distributors to producing masters of their own, and in 2015 launched Arrow Films USA. While its UK fan base remains first priority, Arrow is chucking some meaty bones across the region divide to their North American fans.

Case in point: 1976's *Island of Death*. Greek director Niko Mastorakis self-released his first film on a region-free PAL DVD in 2003. Image Entertainment subsequently licensed it for an NTSC DVD release; in 2011 Arrow released a PAL DVD; and recently the company put out a new high-definition transfer on Blu-ray and DVD for both the European and North American markets.

Mastorakis wrote and directed the film after being appalled by the violence in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and dazzled by the box office success of it. He spent one day conjuring up over-the-top death scenes, another fantasizing the most perverse sexual situations he could film, cranked out a script in a week and put together \$30,000 to make it.

There's not much of a plot. Christopher and Celia, a handsome young couple, arrive on the picturesque island of Mykonos for their honeymoon. They squeeze into a phone booth to have sex while on the line to Christopher's mother in England — who turns out to be mother to both of them! Christopher (Robert Behling) is a self-described "angel with a flaming sword sent to kill dirty worms" who goes on a murder spree with his increasingly reluctant sister (Jane Lyle), targeting perverts and deviants. Oblivious to his own incest and casual bestiality, Christopher cuts a homicidal swath through the island's eccentric residents with paint, swords, garden shears and in a couple of inspired moments, an airplane and a bulldozer! The gore is crude and the tone crass. The effect is mental.



Island of Death

Arrow is noted for their extras. This DVD/Blu-ray combo includes a reversible cover, featurettes *Exploring Island of Death* with revered British writer Stephen Thrower and *Return to Island of Death* (in which Mastorakis revisits the original shooting locations), a vintage interview, alternate title sequences, original soundtrack music, a trailer, a lengthy documentary on Mastorakis' films, a trailer reel and an exclusive booklet.

Arrow further beefs up its blood buffet with a particularly pungent piece of '80s slasher cheese: *The Mutilator*. Originally titled *Fall Break*, this cliché-choked 1985 dorm/holiday slasher hybrid was retitled by Vestron Video for its VHS release. The distributor dropped two cuts — the R version with a light blue cover and an unrated version with a black cover. Woe be unto those who suffered the R!

Writer/director Buddy Cooper hewed close to the formula. The prologue is the standard serial killer-birthing traumatic childhood accident: while cleaning his dad's shotgun as a birthday present, Ed Jr. (Matt Mittler) blows away his mother. Big Ed (Jack Chatham) then abandons his boy for the bottle. Now a maladjusted college student, Ed Jr. is surprised when his father calls to ask him to close his beach

house for the season. Ed Jr. and his stereotypical slasher fodder friends pile into a vintage convertible and road trip to the cabin to be sliced and diced over fall break.

The gore is the only real highlight here. The special effects were the breakout for Mark Shostrom, who had previously toiled anonymously on crews for *Videodrome* (1983) and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984). Without the lovingly lurid outboard motor disembowelment, pitchfork tracheotomy, fish gaff dilation and curettage, and outrageous climax — all truncated in the R version — there are only the arch antics and bared breasts of the cast to suffer. While a tidy time capsule of the era of popped collars and deck shoes, there's not enough in the tank to sustain much interest past the grue.

Don't take my jaundiced word for it, though (seriously, the '80s were dreadful), as there are spiffy restorations from original vault materials of both the R and unrated versions — which is odd, as Code Red DVD announced a release of this a few years ago and withdrew it claiming the original materials were beyond repair. Extras include recent interviews with cast and crew, a locations visit, and a collector's booklet featuring archived articles on the film. Arrow offers everything you need to dig right down to the greasiest gristle.

