



# QUEUED UP

BY BRYAN REESMAN

## THE TERROR (1963)

**The setup:** A weary, wandering soldier (Jack Nicholson) in 18th century France is lured to a castle by a ghostly woman (Sandra Knight) who shares a connection with its secretive old baron (Boris Karloff). Beguiled, the soldier imposes himself on the baron to learn the identity of this beautiful lady.

**The breakdown:** This Roger Corman cheapie—whose co-directors included Nicholson and a young Francis Ford

Coppola—was shot quickly on a fantastic castle set and at beautiful seaside locations that, along with its flashy finale, give the movie its production value. Given its languid pace, this supernatural mystery is easy to solve, and it's amusing to watch French characters speaking with distinctly American accents. But as a retro curio—with a youthful Nicholson playing off a seasoned Karloff, and the nice set pieces and cinematography—*The Terror* is



worth checking out for fans of both actors. The Film Detective's Blu-ray release offers a nice transfer.

## AMERICAN HORROR PROJECT Volume 1 (1973-1976)

Digging up obscure flicks from the mid-1970s, this combined Blu-ray/DVD box set features a supernatural tale about a woman whose visions about her child's crazed abductors may save her (*The Premonition*); a suspense story about a single mother who suffered childhood sexual abuse and fantasizes about the deaths of men that soon occur (*The Witch Who Came From The Sea*); and a weird story about a dilapidated carnival that secretly houses cannibalistic ghouls who feed on stray visitors (*Malatesta's Carnival Of Blood*).

Co-starring cult icon Richard Lynch and a young Danielle

Brisebois, *The Premonition* is a pretty good paranormal thriller with solid performances and a surreal ending. Starring Millie Perkins (*The Diary of Anne Frank*), *Witch...* conjures an interesting narrative and good lead performance that get a bit sidetracked by a lagging pace. *Malatesta's...* suffers from half-baked plotting and weak acting, although the vampiric Jerome Dempsey lends an air of gravitas and a pre-*Fantasy Island* Hervé Villechaize enlivens things. It does feature some intriguing images (and a genuine carnival location in its death throes) which make one think what one-time



could have achieved with a better budget.

At \$100 list price, this is a daunting purchase for curious onlookers, but hardcore fans of these movies should find the nice packaging, genuinely interesting bonus features, and 60-page booklet with essays and photos to be worthwhile. It's nice that companies like Arrow Video cater to cult film fanatics overlooked by larger studios.

## THE MAN AND THE MOMENT (1929)

**The set up:** A philandering playboy (Rod La Rocque) falls for a naïve aviatrix (Billie Dove) and cons her into marrying him so, on the surface, she can be free of her stern guardian and he of the married woman who has her claws in him. Their platonic arrangement goes awry when he brazenly seduces her, so she rebels by transforming into the carefree party girl while he becomes the smitten, doting romantic seeking forgiveness.

**The breakdown:** Once thought lost but thankfully restored, this silent, black and white romantic comedy features sound effects and a few key talking sequences. It also offers three very memorable moments—a reckless game of water polo with speedboats, a nightclub tank filled with bikini clad beauties (which gets wrecked), and an airplane crash sequence. It may not be a classic, but it's an enjoyable romp from its time.

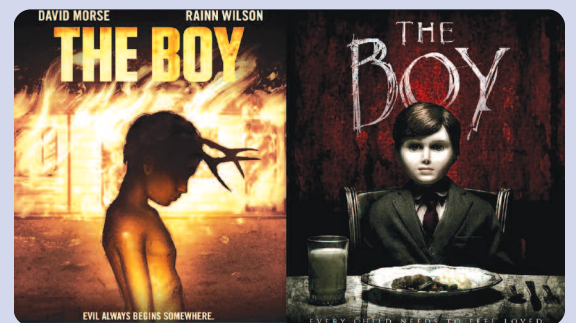


## BOY VS. BOY

Two recent movies called *The Boy* have arrived on home video—both depict evil in markedly different ways.

*Boy #1* (2015) focuses on a single father and motel owner (David Morse) whose failing business and isolation do not sit well with his bored nine year-old son (Jared Breeze), who quietly exhibits strange behavior that waylays passing strangers, including a creepy Rainn Wilson, who begins to exert undue influence on him. This *Boy* wants to chronicle the banality of evil in how it can progress slowly and insidiously, but its glacial pace might have you checking out before the chaotic climax.

*Boy #2* (2016) prefers



traditional gothic chills with a twist. A young nanny (Lauren Cohan) goes to England to seek refuge from an abusive ex-boyfriend, but she lands one weird gig—taking care of an old couple's eight year-old son, which is actually a life-size doll that they insist needs to be loved lest bad things happen. When they go on vacation and leave her with the creepy thing,

strange sounds and unnerving events lead her to believe it may be possessed by the spirit of their real-life son, who died tragically 20 years earlier. There are some genuinely creepy moments here, and the third act twist will either grab you or have you rolling your eyes—actually, probably both. This *Boy* is ultimately a mixed bag, but it gets an A for effort.

## BRIEF ENCOUNTER (1945)

**The set up:** A suburban mother of two (Oscar-nominated Celia Johnson) and a handsome doctor (Trevor Howard) spiral into an affair after repeatedly bumping into one another on her weekly visits to a nearby town. But what starts off as a passionate getaway from their stale marriages creates emotional turbulence when they struggle to break things off.

**The breakdown:** Before

tackling major Hollywood epics, David Lean directed Noel Coward's intimate tale of two adults seeking to rekindle romantic magic in their lives, despite knowing that what they are doing could have dire consequences. The film is beautiful in that it chooses not to judge its protagonists but shine a light on what makes people fall in love with someone else, and how such precarious dalliances often help them to



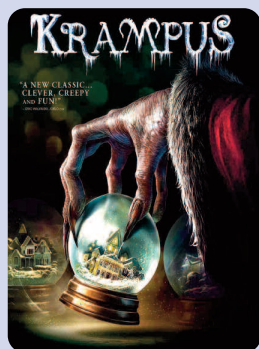
reevaluate their lives. *Brief Encounter* depicts a heartbreaking romance that is wise in perspective.

## KRAMPUS (2015)

**The set up:** You better not shout, you better not cry, you better not pout, I'm tellin' you why...Krampus will come and drag you to Hell!

**The breakdown:** Inspired by a figure in Austro-Bavarian folklore—the devilish counterpart to St. Nick who devours or damns misbehaving children to the inferno—Michael Dougherty's bloody tongue-in-cheek flick expands the victims to include nasty adults (and their naughty *inner* children). It all

starts when a young boy named Max, incensed by his pathetic, feuding extended family, tears up his letter to Santa, which rides the wind to the horned, cloven hoofed Krampus. His petty clan and neighbors soon become snowbound and picked off one by one by the giant villain and his minions, including nasty elves, demonic toys, and mischievous gingerbread men. The cheeky cast (including Toni Collette) digs into the satire, while Weta Digital and Weta Workshop deliver fantastic



special effects and concept design, respectively. Don't expect to be scared too much, but that's not the point—*Krampus* is a horrific holiday hoot.

## HUSH (2016) and THE TAKING OF DEBORAH LOGAN (2014)

Netflix has become littered with innumerable B-grade horror flicks, but occasionally you find some hidden gems. Both of these films take familiar premises and freshen them up. With a modest five-person cast, *Hush* focuses on a deaf author (Kate Siegel) living in rural isolation who becomes the target of a deranged killer (John Gallagher Jr.) who seeks to fully terrorize her before slaying her. But he does not expect the kind of fiery resistance that she delivers, and the two match wits to the vicious end. You've seen it before, but



star/co-writer Siegel gives her character three dimensions and delivers a bravura performance.

*The Taking Of Deborah Logan* propels the standard concept of a documentary gone awry with a strong performance from Jill Larson as an elderly woman whose descent into Alzheimer's is being documented by a collegiate video crew. But when

she begins showing signs of what could be demonic possession, the beleaguered students dig into the town's past to uncover what the evil trigger could be. Larson exudes creepiness with nuance, and although the final act loses steam, the climactic scenes and the final shot are memorably eerie.

Netflix Fix: