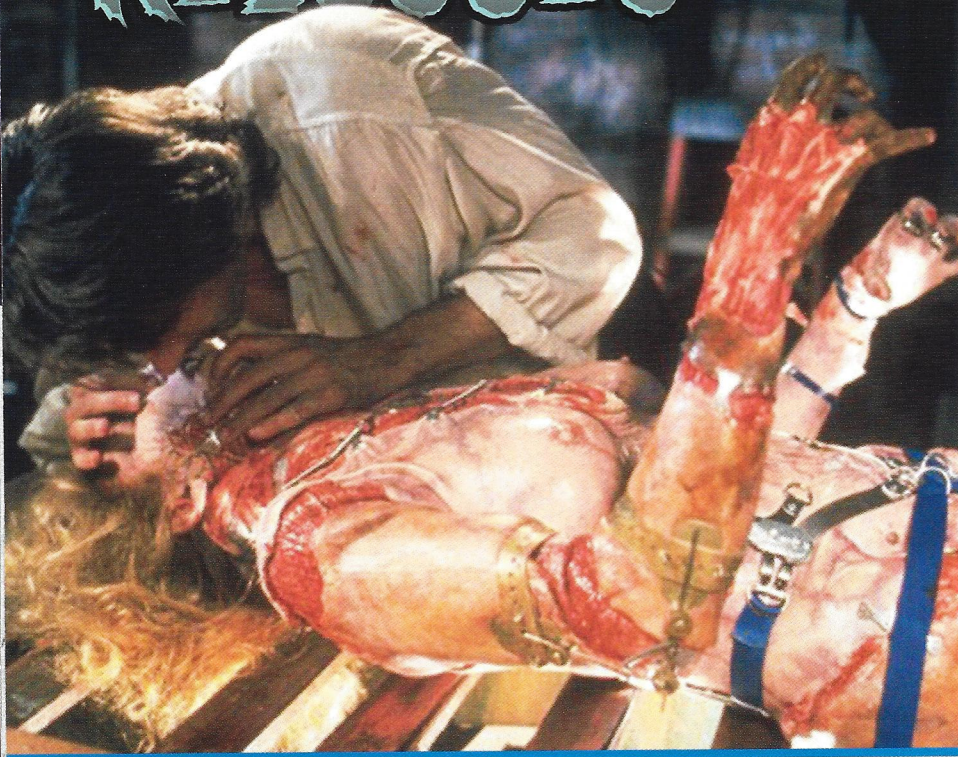


REISSUES



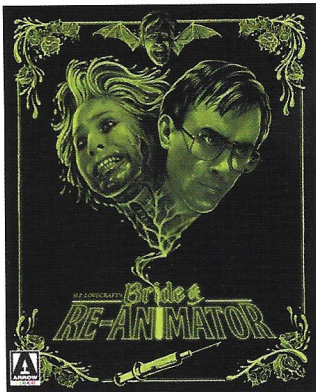
WEST STANDS THE TEST

BRIDE OF RE-ANIMATOR (1989) Blu-ray

Starring Jeffrey Combs, Bruce Abbott and Fabiana Udenio
Directed by Brian Yuzna
Written by Rick Fry, Woody Keith and Brian Yuzna
Arrow Films

While *Re-Animator* remains a gold standard splatter movie of the '80s, its sequel *Bride of Re-Animator* has long been unfairly dismissed. Granted, topping the groundbreaking gore comedy was impossible and the sequel lacked the demented guiding hand of Stuart Gordon. Yet, working under ridiculous time constraints almost alongside his perversely satirical debut *Society*, Brian Yuzna delivered a satisfyingly sick and grungy follow-up that's finally getting almost too much respect on Blu-ray.

As Yuzna reveals in a new interview on the disc, the script was compiled hastily when money suddenly appeared. So, it's an understandably sloppy affair opening with doctors Herbert West (Jeffrey Combs) and Dan Cain (Bruce Abbott) reanimating corpses on a battlefield, before turning to a more



budget-conscious plot involving the titular bride compiled from stolen body parts, including the heart of Barbara Crampton's character from the first *Re-Animator* – sadly it's the only part of her that returns.

The film is a mix of clever and stupid story devices connected by Yuzna's wonky camp comedy and Combs' lovingly ludicrous presence. The surreal splatter effects truly deliver when they arrive, whether it's a dripping bride from *KNB*, nightmare body-part creatures from *Screaming Mad George*, or the ridiculous sight of a severed head flying with batwings. *Bride of Re-Animator* is downright nuts. Flawed? Sure, but also hilarious and imaginatively disgusting.

The Blu-ray presentation is a revelation given that the movie has only ever been available in cheap full-frame releases or leftover laser disc transfers (bootleg or otherwise). Aside from a few grainy scenes, due to the use of rare unrated footage or dated optical effects, the movie looks beautiful and probably sounds better than it ever did theatrically. In addition to including both the unrated and R-rated cuts (though why anyone would watch a censored splatter mov-

ie is beyond me), all of the old commentaries and vintage featurettes (filled with bizarre VHS set footage) are ported over from the '90s releases. But the best features are the new ones, such as a fresh interview and commentary from Yuzna (who is shockingly subdued and even scholarly for a man who specialized in sleaze) and a fascinating look back at the makeup effects delivered by an all-star team of artists just starting out in the industry. It's a stacked release lovingly honouring a movie ripe for rediscovery by weirdos everywhere.

PHIL BROWN

MORE BRAINS FOR YOUR BUCK

THE RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD (1985) Blu-ray

Starring Thom Mathews, James Karen and Linnea Quigley
Written and directed by Dan O'Bannon
Scream Factory

In 2009, Circle Cinema in Tulsa, Oklahoma – a staunchly conservative city in a hyper-conservative state – hosted its first-ever Slumber Party, a horror movie marathon challenging patrons to “survive the night” by staying up until the wee hours of the morning. It's telling that the film chosen to kick off the event, which is now a yearly pilgrimage for Oklahoma's counterculture, was *The Return of the Living Dead*. This is the touchstone horror film for those who came of age at the height of '80s conservatism, a horror-comedy call-to-arms for the disenfranchised. Plus, it's a great zombie flick.

Warehouse stock boy Freddy (Thom Mathews) has the worst first day in history: in an attempt to impress, his boss Frank (James Karen) shows him an oil drum containing what we're told is basically the sole “surviving” zombie (the famous slimy “Tarman,” played by Allan Trautman) from *Night of the Living Dead*. As Frank explains, the film was based on a true story, one that ended with the government sealing up the living dead and restoring order. The drum has been ill-maintained, though, and one good slap causes it to burst open, freeing its inhabitant and unleashing a gas that resurrects the dead. That's bad news, not just for Freddy but also for the punks he runs with, who've arrived early to pick him up... and decided to kill time at the cemetery across the street.

Released when punk was still gaining acceptance in the mainstream, *RotLD* was something of a watershed moment, marking one of the first times members of the subculture were depicted as heroic. This is also the film that salvaged the

