

Raped

Opening to a Manhattan montage designed by Saul Bass and a musical score that may well be superior to Bernard Herrmann, since it was composed for the film by none other than Aaron Copland, the 1961 drama, **Something Wild**, then proceeds to a startlingly graphic rape sequence, followed by an outstanding portrait of the PTSD that follows rape, in the United Artists production, available on Blu-ray from The Criterion Collection (UPC#715515191210, \$40). Carroll Baker, more reminiscent of Lee Remick than of her own usual screen persona, portrays a college student who is assaulted one evening on her way home from classes. She drops out of school, leaves her family and begins an independent life in the city. Directed by Jack Garfein and running 113 minutes, the first half of the film is a tone-perfect portrait of someone coping with an assault, especially from an era where the victim was more likely to keep it to herself than to report the crime. The second half of the film takes a less persuasive turn, however, as she meets a garage mechanic, played by Ralph Meeker, and is terrorized by him, as well, although they eventually find a common ground and form a relationship. The film's exploration of psychology is outstanding—Mildred Dunnock is superb as the self-centered mother of Baker's character, and Jean Stapleton is wicked nasty as an alcoholic neighbor when Baker's character gets her own apartment. The production design is devastatingly dank and dreary, both real and nightmarish at the same time, and is a perfect reflection upon the emotional interiors of the characters. It is because the film sustains such a compelling atmosphere that it can be transfixing, unless you're just not in the mood for its pessimism. Although it can be irritating that Baker's character does not take one or two basic actions against Meeker's character that logic dictates any partially sensible character would take in her situation, the film is otherwise so true to reality that it is both shockingly wise for its time and eternally transfixing as a portrait of how modern life is no protection from the darker natures of humanity.

The black-and-white picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1. The image is spotless, and the crispness of the transfer enhances the impact of the production designs significantly. The monophonic sound is solid and serves Copland's musical score well. There are optional English subtitles and a very nice 15-minute audio interview with Baker, accompanied by a great montage of promotional materials from throughout her career.

Garfein only made two movies—**Something Wild** was the second, and it didn't do well at the boxoffice for understandable reasons—but he was extensively involved with stage productions in New York and, more importantly, he was a key figure in the Actors Studio during its heyday. There is a terrific 27-minute interview with Garfein about his life (he was in a concentration camp), his career and the film, as well as some basics about conducting drama; and there is also a good 21-minute overview of the Studio by theater historian Foster Hirsch, who describes the roots of 'Method' acting and the original creation of the Studio, and how it rose to prominence after the War. He gets to the heart of an argument that raged throughout the existence of the Studio concerning how an actor draws upon emotional experiences to form a performance, after discussing how there was initially a snobbish preference for stage acting over film. "The irony of the Studio's historical resistance to Hollywood is that the Method is a perfect technique for film. It's ideally a film rather than a stage technique. The actor on stage always has to project a little bit, and always has to pay attention to what at the Studio was called 'external technique,' and that's a bad word. You have to speak up, and you have to project. They never work on that at the Studio. It's never discussed. It's always inner work and what you're doing with your own emotion and your emotional library, so to speak. But for film, it can all be very quiet and very inner, and through the eyes, and through the muscles of the face, and that's the kind of training that's done at the Studio." Finally, there is a fascinating 38-minute documentary shot in 2014 entitled *Master Class with Jack Garfein*, in which he lectures students about various aspects of acting (beginning with the need to show up on time), and then has them participate in exercises.

Flapper soap opera

A strikingly youthful Gary Cooper stars with Clara Bow and Esther Ralston in the 1927 Paramount silent feature about marriage and romance in the Roaring Twenties, **Children of Divorce**, a beautifully restored DVD & Blu-ray issued by Blackhawk Films Inc. and Flicker Alley (UPC#61731167-5898, \$60). Running 72 minutes, the film is about a group of twentysomethings who grew up together in a boarding school because their various parents didn't have time for them after breaking up. They vow not to repeat the same errors, but end up marrying out of impulse instead of the heart and find themselves on the same path, until tragedy intervenes. Directed by Frank Lloyd, the appeal of the film is its record of the contemporary period, and the attractiveness of the stars. Cooper's performance is outstanding, conveying the emotions passing through him effortlessly and without exaggeration, while Bow and Ralston are both highly adept at communicating vulnerability and desire. Bow is the headliner and boxoffice draw, and her character goes through the most changes, but it is Cooper that will hold the attention of viewers today.

The narrative may be dismissible, examining the tribulations of

spoiled rich people, but the film is terrific, particularly with the lovely, full screen black-and-white image. Its crispness is like a window on the past. The DVD and the BD are fairly indiscernible, although the BD has slightly crisper details and richer DTS sound. The musical score has a commanding dimensionality and evokes the film's era in an elaborate and satisfying manner.

Also featured is an excellent hour-long profile of Bow from 1999, narrated by Courtney Love, *Clara Bow Discovering the It Girl*, which covers her emotionally complex childhood, her meteoric rise to fame, her career burnout in her mid-twenties, and her reasonably happy post-Hollywood life with cowboy star Rex Bell. We reviewed the documentary previously on DVD in Mar 05.

Detecting murder

Raphaël Personnaz has a very serious Alain Delon thing going, playing the detective who recognizes a pattern in the rapes and killings of several young women in Paris in the 2014 **Serial Killer 1**, a Kino Lorber Blu-ray (UPC#738329209469, \$35). Based upon a true story and running 120 minutes, the film follows two timelines—one as Personnaz's character first joins the squad responsible for researching violent crimes and, over the course of a decade, investigates the deaths of the various women; and the other, the trial of the suspect after he is finally apprehended. The film's tone is a bit reminiscent of **Zodiac**, with deliberate ambiguities and dry suspense. The murderer claims that his confession was extracted with a severe beating, but when the film finally arrives at the confession sequence, it depicts the hero and the murderer casually sharing a drink and discussing how one of the murders was committed. Personnaz, who could be the young Delon's twin, is always just one part of the investigative team after his initial recognition of the killing pattern, and the film spreads out the events of the murders and the attempts to solve them in a quasi-documentary style. As in real life, most of the leads and partial breakthroughs go nowhere, but the film manages to sustain a decent momentum as it jumps from one year to the next. As for the trial, it is interesting for its depiction of the French judicial system, which varies significantly from the American system, and focuses effectively on the two defenders, who are pretty sure their client is guilty, but still have sympathy for his predicament. Directed by Frédéric Tellier, the film is involving as it unfolds, and while it never quite seems to live up to its promise as a standard murder thriller, it accomplishes a great deal more as a sociological exploration and drama. The detective's family grows, and his life goes on. According to an ending title card, France's laws in regards to DNA testing were substantially upgraded because of the case.

The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1. The cinematography is a lovely mix of carefully composed shots and gritty, hand-held confusion, and the transfer is sharp. The DTS sound has some enjoyable directional effects and a decent dimensionality. There is a subtle musical score by Christophe La Pinta, and at times, there are simply environmental tones that seem like they will morph into music, but never do. The film is in French with optional English subtitles, and comes with a trailer.

Can never get enough giallo

Two terrific Italian giallo thrillers from the early Seventies directed by Emilio P. Miraglia, starring Marina Malfatti, and containing characters named 'Evelyn,' who, in both films, have seemingly risen from the dead, are paired in the four-platter DVD & Blu-ray release from Arrow Video, **Killer Dames** (UPC#760137843498, \$70). *The Night Evelyn Came Out of the Grave* is the better known and more complex of the two, although the other film, *The Red Queen Kills Seven Times*, is such a classic, straightforward murder mystery that it is the more satisfying entertainment.

Both films have original Italian language audio tracks and English audio tracks, with optional English subtitles. On both, the lyrical Italian language versions are preferable, as they energize the pace of the films in a manner that the more brusque English language dialog does not. Both movies are letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 2.35:1, and on both, the color transfer looks super, taking great advantage of the terrific outfits and stylish interior decorating. The monophonic sound on both films is strong, and both films have appealing musical scores by Bruno Nicolai. On both, the BD presentations are subliminally preferable to the DVDs.

The story for the 1971 *The Night Evelyn Came Out of the Grave* is entirely logical, but is not spelled out all that clearly at the end, unless you recognize one of the actresses based upon her fame and not just the character(s) she is playing. Anthony Steffen is a wealthy psychiatric patient who completes his stay at the hospital, moves into a castle, and, apparently, immediately begins murdering prostitutes who look like his dead wife. He cleans up his act, however, when he meets a more respectable substitute, played by Malfatti, but once they settle into his mansion, the ghost of the wife begins appearing, as do corpses of the hired help. Running 103 minutes, the film's twists and turns are highly engaging, and there is decent amount of eroticism as well. Some viewers may be turned off by the initial murders, but this is only because the filmmakers don't follow through on their beats at the end of the movie as thoroughly as they should have, to explain what really happened. Indeed, somebody ought to remake the film to do it better. Nevertheless, the film as it exists is reasonably witty and stylish, with a number of pleasingly gruesome moments.

Malfatti and Barbara Bouchet are wealthy sisters waiting with others for a curse to pass so a will can be read and the inheritance distributed in the 1972 *The Red Queen Kills Seven Times*. The curse dictates that one of the sisters will be the seventh victim, and through the course of the 99-minute feature, corpses one through six stack up. The film is loaded with clever little twists as well as bigger ones, and serves as a reminder that the most deadliest words of dialog someone in a murder mystery can utter are, "I know who the murderer is. We can't talk here." Bouchet's character is also a fashion photographer, thus drenching the film in a modernist atmosphere that is quite effectively contrasted with the dank castle she stands to inherit.

Evelyn is accompanied by two trailers; a good 23-minute interview with production designer Lorenzo Baraldi, who talks about his career and speaks informatively about the film's sets and locations; a concise 15-minute analysis of the film and the backgrounds of its cast by Stephen Thrower (he points out the wonderful metaphorical walk through the castle the hero and one of his prostitutes take at the beginning of the film); and 42 minutes of marvelous interviews with co-star Erika Blanc, who talks about the film, her acting career (she moved on to the stage when the film roles dried up), Steffen's narcissism, and what it was like being a sex symbol in her day.

There is also a commentary track by film critic Troy Howarth, who is not as on point as Thrower is, but uses the time to speak more extensively about the careers of many of the cast and crew members, and talk a bit more about the dynamics of the film, its mix of giallo and gothic elements, and the narrative dynamics. As for the giallo genre, he suggests that viewers should not get too caught up in attempting to apply artistic standards to what are essentially films that have been packed with exploitation features such as nudity and gore to rake in the profits, but the films just look and sound so good that you really can't help it. The filmmakers ended up being artistic despite their better instincts.

Red Queen has an engaging 20-minute interview with co-star Sybill Danning, who talks about her character in the film (she complains about her death scene, but was pleased with the movie overall) and her career as a whole (her mother, living in a small Austrian town, was ashamed of her, although otherwise she is proud of her free-spirited performances); another 14-minute interview with Baraldi, who talks about finding the locations, securing the costumes, and the effectiveness of a sequence with rats; a very nice 18-minute interview with co-star Marino Masé, who doesn't say too much about his own part, but talks extensively about the other performers (he says Bouchet and Danning didn't get along all that well, although Danning said they did), the locations, the film's artistic dynamics, and his career as a whole; another thorough 14-minute analysis of the film by Thrower (although we would disagree with his assessment of the film's first act); a 4-minute remembrance of Miraglia by Masé, Blanc and Baraldi; a minute-long press interview with Bouchet in which she talks about her surprise at the popularity of her cult films; a minute-long addition to the opening sequence that was used in some territories, spelling out the passage of time between the opening teaser and the rest of the film; a minute-long introduction to both movies by Baraldi; and two trailers.

One of our favorite commentary teams, British historians Alan Jones and Kim Newman, who have talked on many other giallo thrillers including *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* (Dec 09) and *What Have You Done to Solange?* (Feb 16), supply another one of their delightful commentary tracks for *Red Queen*, speaking extensively about the story, the cast, the crew and the film's production history, but always including their own impish perspective on the business and art of motion pictures. Verifying the gossip about animosities between Bouchet and Danning, they also offer a concise appreciation of Bouchet's appeal in the film. "She sort of like exemplifies the giallo heroine. She looks good, she doesn't mind taking her clothes off, she cuts a great figure." "There is a sense of 'fetchingly distressed.'"

They take a dimmer view of the male lead, Ugo Pagliai, especially in comparison to Masé, who was playing the police detective. "One thing that makes sense now that you've told that anecdote of the actors picking their own clothes is that the police inspector has the best male designs in this. The leading man, who is in theory a fashion professional, wears really terrible jackets, whereas the policeman is really smart throughout, he's like the best dressed guy. Here, look at this contrast here. Which of these men knows how to wear clothes best? It's the policeman."

They talk about the film's various components, from its sunny cinematography to its gothic locations, and they also discuss the transition that the art of makeup underwent in the Seventies and Eighties. "Back then, I don't think they had particularly special makeup people, did they? The blood was just put under the makeup." "Probably the makeup guy spent more time making Barbara Bouchet look glamorous than disemboweling people, whereas later, it was the makeup artists who did the murders who became the superstars."

Finally, they share their own infectious enthusiasm for the film:

"This is one of those gialli that feels more like a slasher movie to me. It's fun. It's, you know, gruesome and horrible, but it's also, without tipping too many winks to the audience, it's a film that's obviously enjoying itself. I think that comes across to the audience. I think that's why there's a great deal of affection for it as a film, that maybe some of the more austere

gialli don't have."

"I will happily watch this every year, forever."

Another enjoyable giallo with lots of great sex, many plot turns, and a wonderful title, *Your Vice Is a Locked Room and Only I Have the Key*, is also available on Blu-ray from Arrow (UPC#760137794998, \$30). Luigi Pistilli is an alcoholic writer living in a large, inherited mansion, who terrorizes his wife, played by Anita Strindberg, until her niece, played by Edwige Fenech, shows up and changes the dynamics of the house. At the same time, someone is murdering local goodtime girls. Running 96 minutes, the 1972 feature has a satisfying number of twists and surprises, atmosphere galore, oodles of eroticism, and an ideal climax that is effectively taken—and acknowledged—from Edgar Allan Poe's *The Black Cat*. It is also worth noting that several years before *The Shining*, the film, directed by Sergio Martino, has its own goosebump-inducing shot of a wife discovering that her writer husband's industrious typing has not been as productive as she had assumed.

Along with the Italian version, an English language version is included, dully titled *Gently before She Dies*, with the same running time and English language inserts for some text sequences. The picture is letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.85:1. The color transfer looks great—in fact, the makeup on the performers looks a bit uneven at times because the image replication is so crisp and accurate. The monophonic sound is solid and there is another effective Nicolai musical score. There are optional English subtitles.

A very good 35-minute interview with Martino is included, who talks about his inspirations for the film (he repeatedly refers to Poe's story, which has less than 4000 words, as a 'novel,' or at least that's how it is translated in the subtitles) and how it relates to his other movies (he's proud of the movie's provincial atmosphere), and also explains how a few key sequences were executed; another 23-minute interview with Martino (he mentions the *Shining* connection; he also likens editing on an Avid to buying pasta in a supermarket as opposed to making your own), Fenech (who was surprised the film was such a cult favorite), and screen writer Ernest Gastaldi; a solid and insightful 30-minute overview of Martino's gialli features that includes a very fine deconstruction of *Vice*; a 30-minute profile of Fenech, who segued into comedies and softcore sex films (from which there are lots of great stills) before becoming Italy's Oprah Winfrey, that is highly informative, but not all that appealingly designed, with the narrator, critic Justin Harries, looming innocuously in a wide angle lens in front of the preferable stills and clips of Fenech herself; and a 9-minute appreciation of *Vice* by American exploitation director Eli Roth.

Roth also provides a 2-minute introduction on Martino's masterpiece, *Torso*, a Blue Underground Blu-ray release (UPC#827058703598, \$31). We reviewed a DVD release in Jun 00. After a masked murderer kills a couple of co-eds, the heroine and her friends decide to get out of town and travel to a somewhat remote villa. Unfortunately, the killer follows them. The film has some terrific sex scenes that, while providing the appropriate exploitation titillation, serve specifically to emphasize the vulnerability of the victims. There is a reasonable logic to everything that happens, although the cause of the killer's insanity and, more specifically, why it was re-ignited, is awkwardly and obscurely presented. Any flaws are excused, however, by the film's brilliantly executed final act, which takes up an entire third of its running time, where the heroine is trapped in the villa while the killer goes about his business with her friends, unaware that she is there. In a great reversal of the usual cliché and the many killer-peaking-at-the-naked-women shots earlier on, it is the heroine who becomes the voyeur, albeit terrified, as the killer goes about chopping up his victims. Remembering to breathe is a challenge.

The 1973 film was originally entitled *I corpi presentano tracce di violenza carnale*, and is sometimes known as *Carnal Violence*, but the *Torso* title caught on so well with fans that even Martino refers to it that way in his interviews. Suzy Kendall and Tina Aumont star, and it is worth noting that the film contains an unusual amount of lesbian activity for its day—the four girls staying in the villa pretty much pair off.

Blue Underground presents two versions of the film, the standard 90-minute English language release and a 93-minute Italian language release. The English version has all of the sex and violence you could possibly want. The Italian version mainly adds a key scene that didn't involve the girls and maybe interrupts the suspense in the final act, although it is critical to understanding the final lines of dialog in the film, which make almost no sense if you haven't seen that scene. Splitting the difference, the older DVD ran 92 minutes and did have that key scene, although it was left in Italian. The dubbing on the English version isn't bad, although the flow of the Italian dialog is still preferable.

Letterboxed with an aspect ratio of about 1.66:1, the color transfer on the older DVD looked fine, but the new presentation is brighter, crisper and cleaner, and hues are stronger at times. The monophonic sound is passable. There are optional English, French and Spanish subtitles, a good 11-minute interview with Martino, a more rambunctious minute-long alternate opening title sequence, two TV commercials, 2 minutes of hairy radio commercials, three trailer and a nice collection of promotional materials in still frame.