



# QUEUED UP

BY BRYAN REESMAN

## SUPERGIRL: The Complete First Season (2016)



**The set up:** Before Krypton is destroyed, Superman's cousin is sent to protect him on Earth, but by the time her pod arrives following an unintended detour, Kal-El has already become an established icon called Superman in the city of Metropolis. Laying low in her guise as assistant to a media mogul in nearby National City, Kara Danvers (Melissa Benoist) becomes empowered when she saves a plane from crashing and unleashes her secret identity on the world, branded Supergirl by, of all people, her catty boss (Calista Flockhart). Lured into government hands by her

secret agent big sister Alex, Supergirl works with the Department of Extranormal Operations to take on alien threats to the Earth (including her nefarious aunt, General Astra). But nothing and no one are what they seem, especially at the DEO.

**The breakdown:** Marvel may rule movies, but DC firmly commands the small screen. This high flying superhero saga serves up the fun missing from the DC Cinematic Universe, striking a good balance of dramedy, camp, romantic awkwardness (a triangle with her friends Winn and James (not Jimmy) Olsen), and slam

bang action. While Supergirl has to cope with DEO mandates on one side and Kara's bullying boss on the other, she evolves into an empowered superhero and young woman as the season progresses, learning to control her powers and handle threats of all kinds. DC fans should also enjoy the appearances of tech magnate Maxwell Lord, villains like Livewire and Bizarro, and heroes like The Flash and J'onn J'onzz.

## MIDNIGHT SPECIAL (2016)

**The set up:** After freeing an eight-year-old boy named Alton (Jaeden Lieberher) from a Texas doomsday cult that covets him, his father (Michael Shannon) and a friend (Joel Edgerton) rush him by car to a mysterious rendezvous, with cult members and the federal government in feverish pursuit. The boy, who has tremendous powers of telekinesis and beyond, is an unknown element that have some people believing he could be a messianic protector, while the feds perceive him as a threat because

of intimate government knowledge that he possesses.

**The breakdown:** Writer-director Jeff Nichols has crafted a cerebral sci-fi film that, while slow to warm up, swells to a suspenseful and dazzling finale that raises as many questions as it answers. But that simply makes it more enticingly enigmatic. The supporting cast (Kirsten Dunst, Adam Driver, and Sam Shepard) offers solid reinforcement, and Adam Stone's cinematography invigorates the fantastic elements. There's a fun



in-joke when the father (Shannon, aka General Zod from *Man Of Steel*) wishes his son didn't read Superman comics because they are not connected to real life.

## BOY & THE WORLD (2013)



**The set up:** Cuca's father leaves their rural dwelling to go work in the big city, so the scrappy young boy seeks him out. His adventures lead him through cotton fields, a cotton factory, slums, a city market, and a militarized urban center. Along the way he learns about both the magical and terrible aspects of the world and begins to confront the forces that will shape his life.

combines animation styles with mixed media in its blend of magical realism and fantasy, shirking dialogue to let the images do the talking. Featuring eye-popping sequences, writer-director Alê Abreu's tale explores a young boy's awakening as he copes with the absence of his father and comes up against poverty, oppression, and the ill effects of mass consumerism. But there are moments of magic and beauty too, such as when Cuca journeys among the

clouds or when a group of musicians and a fascist army each use their respective energy to conjure giant birds to battle one another in the sky. I wish we had more animated films like this rather than stories about cuddly talking animals.

**The breakdown:** This Oscar nominee for Best Animated Feature Film (from Brazil)

## CRIMES OF PASSION (1984)

**The set up:** A lonely fashion designer (Kathleen Turner) moonlights as a role-playing prostitute named China Blue to explore her sexuality. An unhappily married surveillance agent (John Laughlin) asked to spy on her falls in love with her. And a sexually repressed preacher (Anthony Perkins) with pervy predilections seeks to save her soul from damnation. Their worlds eventually collide.

shocking and scandalous, and he certainly delivered with this cinematic thesis on love and sexuality. It is Turner's most outrageous role, ripe with risqué attire and nudity, but her provocative performance and the raunchy story actually belie a more poignant message about dangerously isolating sex and love as well as the need to be loved for who you are. The closing monologue brilliantly wraps it all up. This Blu-ray/DVD reissue includes typically strong Arrow Video extras: commentary from Russell and writer



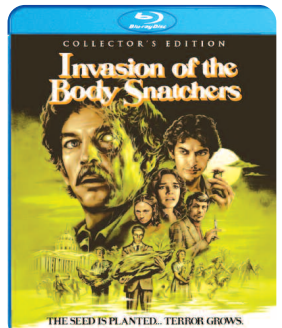
**The breakdown:** The late director Ken Russell always reveled in being

Barry Sandler, new interviews with Sandler and composer Rick Wakeman, deleted scenes, liner notes, and the longer director's cut of the film with some non-HD elements.

## INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (1978)

**The set up:** When alien pods infiltrate San Francisco and surreptitiously replicate and replace its citizens, two public health officials (Donald Sutherland and Brooke Adams) seek to find the source of the invasion and stop it from spreading.

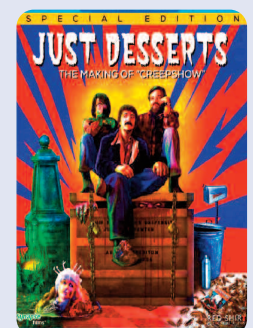
still gets under your skin. He is aided by a great cast: Sutherland, Adams, Jeff Goldblum, Leonard Nimoy, and Veronica Cartwright. Sutherland's chilling stare and scream at the end is epic. Scream Factory's Blu-ray brings the extras too: new and older interviews and documentaries and commentaries from Kaufman and film historian Steve Haberman. In a 2007 featurette, some of the film's key talent discuss transplanting the



**The breakdown:** While the Don Siegel directed original rules supreme, this version directed by Philip Kaufman (*The Right Stuff*)

story from 1950s small town America to 1970s San Francisco—different times and different ideas, but the same fears.

## JUST DESSERTS: THE MAKING OF "CREEPSHOW" (2007)



**The set up:** Prior to both the EC Comics revival and HBO's *Tales From The Crypt* series in the mid to late '80s, director George Romero and screenwriter Stephen King conjured this gruesomely fun, EC-inspired anthology that has since become a cult favorite. Director Michael Felsher and Red Shirt Pictures, known for their excellent bonus features on Scream Factory releases, delve into the making of this classic 1982 chiller, chatting up Romero, makeup artist

Tom Savini, first AD/composer John Harrison, actors Adrienne Barbeau, Ed Harris, and Tom Atkins, and various other cast and crew about their on-set recollections.

**The breakdown:** *Just Desserts* is a delicious treat for fans of this seminal horror gem. From conception to production to legacy, Felsher lovingly probes the *Creepshow* continuum. While it would have been nice to have seen interviews with Ted Danson (well represented via

on set footage) and particularly Stephen King, the documentary offers plenty of insights, vintage photos and footage, and colorful stories from everyone concerned—diving into the wild water stunts and the breeding of 18,000 imported roaches on set certainly tops the list.

## STRANGER THINGS (2016)

Netflix Fix:

You've undoubtedly heard the buzz surrounding this eight-part Netflix series, a sci-fi/horror throwback which co-stars Winona Ryder, David Harbour, and Matthew Modine. In a small Indiana town in 1983, people are puzzled and concerned by the disappearance of a 12-year-old boy (and soon others) at a site close to a secret government lab working on unearthly experiments. Adults, teens, and the boy's young friends and a telekinetic girl all seek to find him. A few CGI effects aside, *Stranger Things* looks and

feels like it could have been made in the '80s. The kids are awkwardly endearing and not Hollywood brats (Finn Wolfhard, Millie Bobby Brown, Gaten Matarazzo, and Caleb McLaughlin are all great), the sheriff is a shrewd guy, and some of the townies are not stereotypically dense. Combining rich characters, deft writing, and a glorious synth-driven score by Kyle Dixon and Michael Stein (aka SURVIVE), *Stranger Things* is long-needed genre TV that is original while siphoning everything genre '80s, from *E.T.* and *The*



*Goonies* to *Videodrome* and *Firestarter*. While a second season is allegedly being planned, this one works as a whole. I kind of wish they would leave it as is.