

DIGITAL DEBUTS

ARROW VIDEO

(\$39.95 2-disc Blu-ray + DVD) 7/16

SUTURE (1993) B&W ♂♂♂

D: Scott McGehee, David Siegel. Dennis Haysbert, Mel Harris, Michael Harris, Sab Shimono, David Graf, Dina Merrill. 96 mins.

Co-exec-produced by Steven Soderbergh, lensed in black-and-white, and sporting the look and feel of an offbeat mid-'60s Golden Age of Anxiety thriller (e.g., John Frankenheimer's *Seconds*, Walter Grauman's *Lady in a Cage*) crossed with a feature-length *Twilight Zone* episode, *Suture* hinges its entire premise on a case of mistaken identity between two nearly "identical" brothers—one, Vincent Towers (Michael Harris), rich and a suspected patricidal killer, the other, Clay Arlington (Haysbert), poor and long-lost. The script and direction—McGehee and Siegel share equal screen credit for both—steer us through a fairly entertaining suspenser, an idiosyncratic mix of the surreal and mundane. Where the filmmakers play with audience assumptions and expectations, however, is in the casting: Harris is white; "identical" sibling Haysbert is black; even beyond pigmentation, they share absolutely no resemblance in height, weight, or features—the effect is akin to casting *Twins*' Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito in a serious film. Your tolerance for this film-long visual irony will likely determine whether or not you enjoy the ride. Arrow Video, meanwhile, goes all out in lavishing extensive TLC on McGehee and Siegel's cult-worthy feature. Extras include a McGehee and Siegel audio commentary, new interviews with the filmmakers, cast and crew, deleted scenes, trailers, and the auteurs' earlier short film *Birds Past*, an homage to Hitchcock's *The Birds*.

—*The Phantom*

BLUE UNDERGROUND

(\$29.98 Blu-ray) 6/16

CIRCUS OF FEAR (aka PSYCHO CIRCUS) (1966) ♂♂♂

D: John Llewellyn Moxey. Christopher Lee, Leo Genn, Anthony Newland, Klaus Kinski, Margaret Lee, Suzy Kendall. 90 mins.

This horror flick wannabe is more of a crime caper/murder mystery, but the gloomy settings and the presence of monstrous superstar Lee make *Circus of Fear/Psycho Circus* a film that genre buffs will have more than a passing interest in. Lee spends much of the film wearing a hood made of sackcloth meant to cover his disfigured face. The ac-

tor's deep, booming voice, complete with a thick Russian/German accent, remains highly recognizable. So is Lee the killer who terrorizes Barberini's Circus, or is it someone else? As the mystery unfolds, there are plenty of obvious clues which point to any one of a number of characters—most notably a young and creepy Kinski. The film opens in London. A group of bad guys steals a large stash of cash. One of their comrades is a double-agent policeman, a hothead who kills a fellow officer during the robbery. The bad guys are in trouble. A gang member hides the loot at the circus, and soon the bodies start piling up. Who is the killer? While hardly a masterpiece, *Circus of Fear* is a reasonably complex chiller with an intelligent script and many surprise twists. Produced by schlockmeister Harry Alan Towers, *Circus* is a definite cut above the era's cheapies: the film is a fun thrill ride which often fools viewers into thinking they know who the killer is—until a variety of surprise plot twists alert them otherwise. Genn, as the police inspector who's determined to get his man, is quite good in a role that calls for him to alternate between being elegant and polite one moment, and a non-sense Sherlock Holmes the next. Blue Underground presents a fine print of this often neglected film. Moxey, still with us in his 90s, contributes a lively commentary track. The film's theatrical trailer is also included. Blue Underground offers *Circus* as a double bill on a single disc. The co-feature, *Five Golden Dragons*, is a Hong Kong-set crime caper featuring an impressive cast of thespians who were definitely slumming: Along with Lee, Hollywood stars Brian Donlevy, Robert Cummings, George Raft and Dan Duryea are on hand, as is Kinski. Rupert Davies, Lee's costar in Hammer's *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave* (1968), is also in the film. Towers produced.

—David-Elijah Nahmod

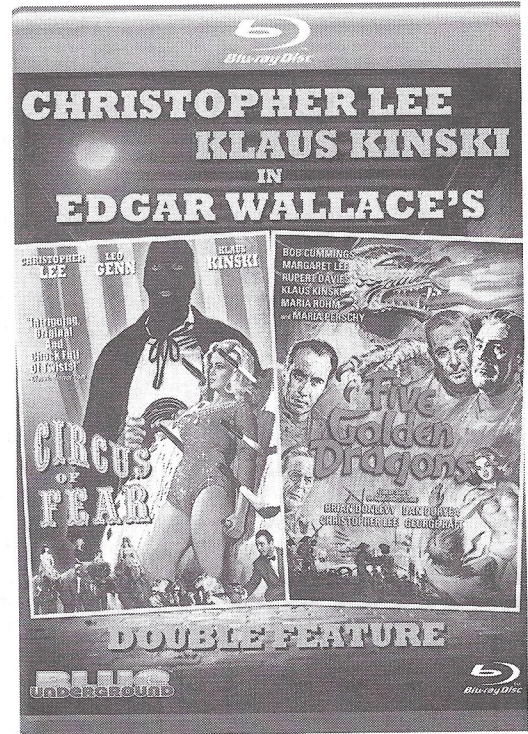
CINEMA EPOCH

(\$24.98 DVD)

BUTTERFLY (1981) ♂♂♂

D: Matt Cimber. Pia Zadora, Stacy Keach, Orson Welles, Lois Nettleton, Edward Albert, Stuart Whitman, James Franciscus. 107 mins.

If you're one of those guys who, back in the day, dreamed of having a Pia Zadora installed in his home, then *Butterfly* is the movie for you. In Matt Cimber's (nee Matteo Ottaviano) absurdist adaptation of James M. (*The Postman Always Rings Twice*) Cain's 1930s-set novel, Pia is nothing short of pitch-perfect as Kady Tyler, a lively little jailbait lust bunny who seeks to reunite with her hermetic absentee pappy Jess (Keach) in the hopes of prying a few silver nuggets from the all-but-deserted desert mine it's his lonely job to guard. The irrepressible nymphette—clothes behave like they have no business being on her—likewise looks to seduce dear



old dad in a bid to further cement their burgeoning bond. Further complicating the increasingly crowded picture are the separate arrivals of Kady's wealthy fiance (Albert), older sister Janey (Ann Dane), long-estranged alcoholic mom Belle (Nettleton), and notorious local ne'er-do-well Moke (Franciscus), who's got schemes of his own in the works. It's all a committed recluse can do to keep his wits about him and, in the course of Jess's growing confusion, abrupt and senseless violence along with charges of flagrant incest ensue, leading to a lengthy courtroom conclusion presided over by a bombastic Welles, in full incurable ham mode as one hoot of cantankerous old-coot judge. While *Butterfly* rarely makes for smooth sailing, from its sometimes awkward staging down to its ludicrous final reveal, it's an absolute must for Zadora adorers. (And if that's not inducement enough, Ed McMahon cameos as Pia's prospective father-in-law.) Cinema Epoch's DVD comes complete with an excellent in-depth 44-minute 2008 featurette gathering candid interviews with stars Pia and Keach, as well as filmmaker Cimber and producer (and former Mr. Zadora) Meshulam Riklis. Pia completists, meanwhile, can continue their explorations with Peter Sarsy's notorious 1983 Hollywood-set Harold Robbins screen translation *The Lonely Lady* (Universal Studios VHS), the truly terrible 1987 sci-fi/musical/comedy combo *Voyage of the Rock Aliens* (Prism VHS, German import Blu-ray), wherein Pia duets with Jermaine Jackson on their inspirational international hit "When the Rain Begins to Fall," John Waters' 1988 *Hairspray* (New Line), where she contributes a cool cameo as a beatnik chick, and the ZAZ Team's *Naked Gun 33 1/3: The Final Insult* (Paramount), where Ms. Z makes a good-naturedly self-mocking appearance as "Herself."

—*The Phantom*