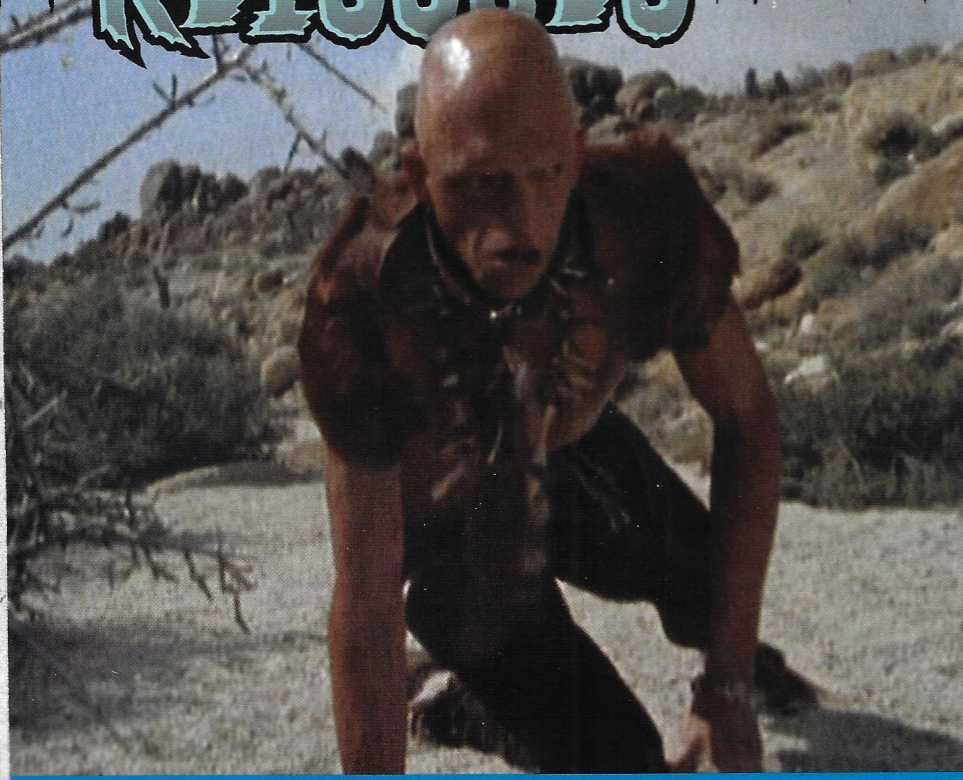


REISSUES



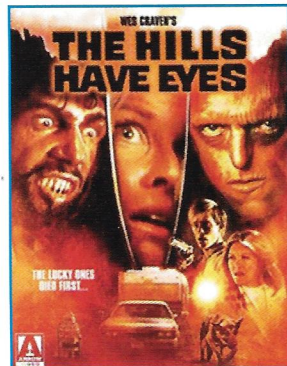
CRAVIN' WES

THE HILLS HAVE EYES (1977) Blu-ray

Starring Susan Lanier, Robert Houston and Martin Speer
Written and directed by Wes Craven
Arrow Video

Forty years after it was filmed in the harsh, forbidding California desert, *The Hills Have Eyes* still stands as one of filmmaker Wes Craven's crowning achievements. Revisiting the theme of a "nice" family reverting to savagery when confronted by a murderous one, which he first explored in *The Last House on the Left*, Craven created a movie whose violence still shocks and whose themes still resonate.

When the road-tripping Carters (whose moniker references then-sitting President Jimmy) break down in the desert turf of a feral family named for the planets (or Roman gods), the stage is set for one of '70s horror's most grueling survival contests. With an atmosphere somewhat reminiscent of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (the movies shared production designer Robert Burns), *Hills* establishes its



own chilling identity and remains potent stuff, with one of the most savage home-invasion sequences – in this case, the home is a trailer – in genre history.

Arrow's Blu-ray showcases a new remastered widescreen transfer with well-realized colours and solid grain structure, bolstered by a wealth of bonus features. Some of these are ported over from the now out-of-print Anchor Bay two-DVD set, including a lively audio commentary by Craven and producer Peter Locke; the excellent documentary *Looking Back on The Hills Have Eyes*, in which the director, his collaborators and cast recall the challenges of the locations, violent scenes and MPAA; and an impressive gallery of photos and promo art. Among the fresh meat is a pair of on-camera interviews: actor Martin Speer echoes his colleagues' warm feelings for Craven and chilly night-shoot set memories from *Looking Back*, and has a great anecdote involving a fan at a convention; and composer Don Peake goes into intriguing detail about his use of unusual instruments and other objects, even props from the film itself to create the score.

A pair of commentaries has also been added. One is a very convivial conversation between Speer and co-stars Susan Lanier, Michael Berryman and Janus Blythe, moderated by Michael Felsher. The other is a highfalutin' academic talk by film studies lecturer Mikel J. Koven, delving into *Hills*' use of mythology and other tropes and the real-life Sawney Bean brood that inspired Craven's story. Rounding out the extras are nineteen minutes of sometimes very amusing outtakes and a booklet containing scholarly analysis of the movie's key themes by critic Brad Stevens and an entertaining rundown of its screen spinoffs by disc producer Ewan Cant. You'll want to give this release eyes for sure.

MICHAEL GINGOLD

STILL A LITTLE MAD

PSYCHO IV: THE BEGINNING (1990) Blu-ray

Starring Anthony Perkins, CCH Pounder and Henry Thomas
Directed by Mick Garris
Written by Joseph Stefano
Shout! Factory

Back before prequels were officially much of a "thing," Anthony Perkins reprised his role as everyone's favourite mama's boy and taxidermy aficionado to conclude a cinema legacy started by Alfred Hitchcock 30 years earlier. Originally broadcast on cable TV, *Psycho IV: The Beginning* is the least successful of the series, but with Perkins on board and Olivia Hussey giving it her all as Norman's domineering mother, the Mick Garris-helmed film manages a passable send-off to one of cinema's most fascinating psychopaths.

Made two years before Anthony Perkins' death in 1992, *Psycho IV: The Beginning* is not a true prequel as with the later *Bates Motel* TV series, but takes place in the present, with a no-longer-institutionalized Norman (Perkins) confiding in the hosts of a call-in radio show. Struggling with news

of his wife's (CCH Pounder: *The Orphan*) pregnancy, he discusses how, as a youth (played by Henry Thomas: *E.T.*), he took care of the motel with his erratic and emotional mom Norma (Hussey: *Black Christmas*), eventually poisoning her and her brutish boyfriend (Tom Schuster). Then, dressing as Norma, he recalls murdering other women who came on to him. Concerned he may pass along his killer genes, he plans to meet his wife in his boyhood house and escape his past, one way or another.

Featuring a script by original *Psycho* screenwriter Joseph Stefano, *Psycho IV* is mostly interested in humanizing Norman, with uneven results. It hits many of the expected notes – incestuous overtones, Norma's humiliation of Norman, Norman's awkwardness and a handful of

