



QUEUED UP

BY BRYAN REESMAN

Halloween Edition

THE PURGE: ELECTION YEAR (2016)

The set up: In the third *Purge* movie, the fascistic ruling party the New Founding Fathers of America (NFFA) have lifted safety measures so that any government official may also be a potential target in the annual 12-hour cathartic Purge where lawlessness is legal. But the real reason for the turnaround is that the NFFA wants to assassinate insurrectionist Senator Roan (Elizabeth Mitchell) whose efforts to end the Purge will come into effect if she wins the current race for the White House. She is forced on the streets to fend for survival with her bodyguard (Frank Grillo).

The breakdown: Like other *Purge* entries, issues of race and class come to the fore as privileged white



citizens use the Purge for both social repression and financial gain. It's a dark, ugly, and violent world that writer-director James DeMonaco has created, and this time out the onslaught of violence reaches a crazy apex that threatens

to undo the film's more serious message. But even then, given this divisive and derisive election cycle and America's acceptance of weekly mass shootings, *The Purge: Election Year* is the most socially relevant film of the year.

RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD (1985)

The set up: After reanimated corpses are burned in a morgue, the deadly toxin that revived them mingles with clouds above a local cemetery, and the town below receives a zombie plague via the rain. A small band of teens and adults take refuge in a mortuary to fend off the attack and stop the undead from spreading. Horrific hilarity ensues.

The breakdown: The zombie movie that brought us the immortal tagline "Brains!" thanks to the rubbery Tarman, Dan O'Bannon's cool ghoulish flick matches his gory milieu



with cheeky humor. One hilarious moment shows zombies feasting on EMTs while a smart one gets on the horn and says, "Send more paramedics." Flesh-rendering effects and lively punk and

death rock tunes add to the fun, and Scream Factory's two-disc release celebrates it all, with many fresh bonus features, including one where the original filming locations are explored.

THE HILLS HAVE EYES (1977)

The set up: After crashing their station wagon and RV in a remote part of the Southwestern desert, a naive family (including a young Dee Wallace) finds itself under nighttime attack by mountain cannibals who show no mercy in dividing and conquering their victims.

The breakdown: Made five years after his controversial film *Last House On The Left*, Wes Craven's outdoor siege movie compensates for its low budget and mixed performances with a gritty look and horrific

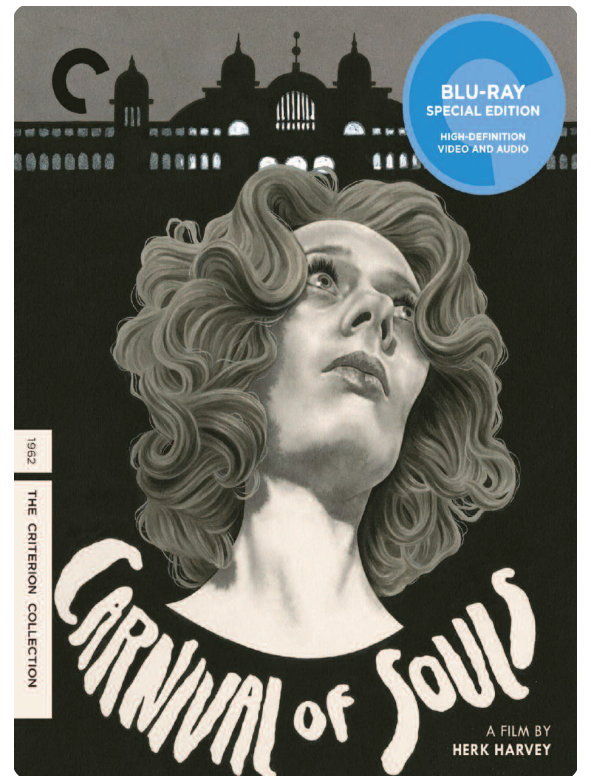
bursts of violence. Fitting in with the hillbilly horror of the '70s, the film is actually most effective during its moments of feral ferociousness when the protagonists revert to animalistic survivalism as the body count mounts. In walking that fine line he peers at the dark side lurking beneath our civilized veneer. Arrow Video's limited edition box set delivers the goods for fans too: a fold-out poster, postcard size reproductions of promotional materials, and a booklet with essays and photos.



CARNIVAL OF SOULS (1962)

The set up: A young church organist is the lone survivor of a car crash into a river. After moving to a new town she begins to experience ghostly visions as well as moments of surreal isolation where no one notices her. She begins wondering how the accident really affected her.

The breakdown: Driven by Gene Moore's atmospheric organ score and Herk Harvey's creepy direction, this classic low budget chiller features a memorable performance from star Candace Hilligoss as the supernaturally besieged protagonist who has opened a doorway to the dead. It's not out and out scary like today's fright fests, but it has some unnerving moments reflecting our heroine's existential dilemma. One of the great Criterion bonus features includes a 1989 public television documentary showcasing the film's revival and features many of its key players. *Carnival Of Souls* is a true cult classic that should be seen by every horror fan.

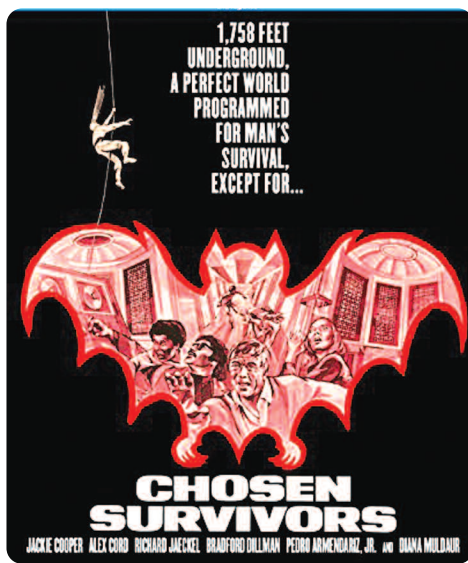


CHOSEN SURVIVORS (1974)

The set up: Eight dazed people are transported underground into a high-tech shelter just before a thermonuclear war takes place. They soon learn they are among selected survivors who have been chosen to help repopulate and rebuild human society. But there is one thing the government architects of their haven did not foresee: an infestation of vampire bats that will dine on any living thing.

The breakdown: This quirky sci-fi/horror mash-up has its flaws, but

the premise, cast chemistry, and retro futurist sets elevate the film. Despite low budget affects in spots, the filmmakers use real vampire bats in others, adding some genuinely creepy production value. Jackie Cooper stands out as the cranky CEO who wants out and is in denial of their predicament, which soon leads to a quick breakdown of their group dynamic. This film could actually be remade today as its survivalist ethos echoes what is happening above ground in America.



THE NEON DEMON (2016)

The set up: A young aspiring model named Jesse (Elle Fanning) gets lured into the glitzy and cutthroat world of modeling in L.A. She is initially preyed upon by and bullied by a variety of miscreants until she learns about the true power of her beauty. But with that knowledge comes a steep price.

The breakdown: *The Neon Demon* is like the '80s love child of directors David Lynch and Michael Mann. Director Nicolas Winding Refn

transcends his familiar tale of youthful exploitation and vanity with a sharp cast, sleek cinematography, an expressive electronic score by Cliff Martinez, a disturbing turn from Keanu Reeves as a sexually predatory motel owner, and a horror vibe that really bites into the spiritual vampirism of Hollywood. His color saturated imagery will infect your synapses and stay seared into your corneas. This is definitely a contender for best film of the year.



THE EXECUTIONER (1963)

The set up: After knocking up an old executioner's daughter, a young undertaker is encouraged to take up his father-in-law's extreme profession in order to provide a comfortable middle class lifestyle for them all. But when he is finally faced with overseeing an actual execution, he tries worming his way out if, knowing that his family could be evicted from their home.

The breakdown: Amid the special features, famed Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar speaks about how director Luis García Berlanga is as important

to Spanish cinema as Luis Bunuel but is not nearly as appreciated. A 2009 episode of the Spanish TV program *The Invisible Half* reveals how the black and white comedy, with its serious twist by the end, reveals the director's thoughts on capital punishment and how his narrative sleight of hand allowed him to slip most of the darkly humorous commentary through censors during the repressive Franco regime. It's a socially aware farce that many horror fans can enjoy and should be appreciated particularly in the context of its release.



THE LITTLE GIRL WHO LIVES DOWN THE LANE (1976)

The set up: A 13-year-old girl (Jodie Foster) whose father is never around draws the unwanted attention of their landlord (Alexis Smith), her pedophile son (Martin Sheen), and a well-meaning cop (Mort Shuman). Only with the help of a slightly older teen boy (Scott Jacoby) can she guard her secrets and domain.

The breakdown: Risqué for its time and even now, Nicholas Gessner's tense and twisted film is an unflinching look into the world of an isolated teen

who is wise beyond her years but also developing psychopathic tendencies thanks to the negative predatory influence of those around her, including the bitchy landlord and her son who is widely known for his perverted predilections. Sheen talks about how the director made the film as fun to make as possible given the subject matter, but it is certainly one of the veteran's actors creepiest roles. It's almost as unnerving as watching him in *Apocalypse Now*.

