

# CREEPSHOW 2

WHEN THE CURTAIN GOES UP  
THE TERROR BEGINS.



## CAST

**GEORGE KENNEDY** as Ray Spruce  
**DOROTHY LAMOUR** as Martha Spruce  
**FRANK S. SALSEDO** as Ben Whitemoon  
**HOLT McCALLANY** as Sam Whitemoon  
**DON HARVEY** as Andy Cavanaugh  
**DAVID HOLBROOK** as Fatso Gribbens  
**DANIEL BEER** as Randy  
**JEREMY GREEN** as Laverne  
**PAGE HANNAH** as Rachel  
**PAUL SATTERFIELD** as Deke  
**LOIS CHILES** as Annie Lansing  
**STEPHEN KING** as Truck Driver  
**TOM WRIGHT** as The Hitchhiker  
**TOM SAVINI** as The Creep

## CREW

Directed by **MICHAEL GORNICK**  
Screenplay by **GEORGE A. ROMERO**  
Based on stories by **STEPHEN KING**  
Directors of Photography **RICHARD HART** and **TOM HURWITZ**  
Edited by **PETER WEATHERLEY**  
Music Composed by **LES REED** and **RICK WAKEMAN**







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## DEADTIME STORIES

by Michael Blyth

George Romero's original *Creepshow* (1982) was always going to be a tough act to follow. Born of a mutual love for vintage horror comics shared between Romero and horror maestro Stephen King, the film was a love letter to a maligned art form frowned upon by concerned parents and panic-stricken teachers. An exercise in wanton nostalgia, to put it simply, watching *Creepshow* makes you feel like a kid again. Even the film's tagline, "The most fun you'll ever have being scared", demonstrated a desire for Romero to dispense almost entirely with the social commentary which had defined his politically-aware horror cinema of the late 1960s and '70s, in favour of a more straightforward approach. Romero and King wanted nothing more than to show you a good time, inviting viewers to join them as they bask in the joys of their beloved genre and pay homage to their misspent youth. As such, *Creepshow* has a special place in the hearts of horror fans, not because of its humour, or visual invention, or playful approach to storytelling (although it has all of these qualities in abundance), but because it feels like it was created solely for them. There is no cynicism on screen, and no pandering to the delicate tastes of the broader film-going mainstream; this was a film made by horror fans, for horror fans.

With this in mind, *Creepshow* fans might have felt a touch disappointed when the sequel emerged in 1987, five years after the original instalment. It's not that the love wasn't there anymore, or that the playful affection toward pulp horror was gone, it just felt a little bit diluted somehow, missing that extra dash of magic which made the original such an unequivocal joy. And of course, being a sequel, one can't ignore the fact that it was, to some extent, cashing in on a winning formula. After all, *Creepshow* went to number one at the US box office back in 1982, a detail which does not go unnoticed by those who count the money. Yet looking back at the film now, time has been kind to *Creepshow 2* – and while it might not eclipse the garish grotesqueries of Romero's iconic precursor, taken on its own terms there is more than enough wit and imagination on display to make this a comic treat well worth revisiting.

Welcome, kiddies, to another diabolical release from those fiendish folks at Arrow. You boils and ghouls just can't get enough of the red stuff, can you? Well, for those of you who like your tales of terror short, sharp and sickening, you've come to the right place, as we have three sordid stories guaranteed to give you sleepless nights. We call this one *Creepshow 2*...







As with most anthology films, the individual tales (once again adapted by Romero from pre-existing King short stories) vary somewhat in terms of quality, and *Creepshow 2* proudly runs the whole gamut, from the great and the good to the pretty damn terrible. In a bold structural decision, things commence with the latter, and it is down to the less than capable “Old Chief Wood’nhead” to kick off proceedings. A cautionary tale of murder and retribution, the film’s opener tells of an elderly couple who own a convenience store in the near destitute southwestern town of Dead River. When the poor old folks are brutally killed by a heartless gang of opportunistic robbers, the wooden statue of a Native American chief who stands guard outside their shop inexplicably comes to life, to take bloody revenge on the men who killed his owners. Although arguably the weakest of the film’s three stories, “Old Chief Wood’nhead” is probably the entry which bears closest resemblance to the EC morality tales which proved the initial inspiration for King and Romero back in 1982. The formula of the EC horror comics was simple; if you do bad things, bad things will happen to you. This straightforward brand of killer karma can be traced through almost every gore-soaked page of *Tales from the Crypt*, *The Vault of Horror* or *The Haunt of Fear*, and such tried and tested moralistic didacticism is precisely what you’ll find in this unambiguous revenge tale. But while the references may be in keeping with the source, it is the, erm, execution which falls somewhat flat. For a tale so rigidly formulaic, a touch more stylistic flair could have lifted it above the mundane. But sadly, like the Chief himself, the leading entry is pretty wooden.

Perhaps the tale suffers from the very nature of it coming first? While the original film opened with the relatively straightforward “Father’s Day”, it was Romero’s visual approach which made the biggest impact. Shot to resemble the gaudy brushstrokes of a comic book, complete with animated borders and imaginative edits, the film looked like nothing else; a bright and self-consciously kitschy feast for the eyes. *Creepshow 2*, regrettably, ditched the comic book look of its predecessor, playing things disappointingly straight. Possibly down to budgetary reasons, as opposed to the artistic limitations of the film’s director, Michael Gornick (a long-time Romero collaborator, who had served as director of photography on *Creepshow*), the loss of such visual gimmickry is *Creepshow 2*’s most immediately apparent letdown – and nowhere else is it more painfully evident than in poor “Old Chief Wood’nhead”.

Fortunately, by the time we turn the page to the next chapter, we’ve become accustomed to the stylistic departure of the sequel, having mourned and (hopefully) moved on, leaving us better equipped to take things at face value. This transition is made even easier by the fact that the second tale, “The Raft”, is an absolute knockout. Sure, Romero’s innovative eye is still missed, but visually it is a far more dynamic piece than the previous yarn, with its sun-drenched locales and bold use of primary colours creating that much-needed comic-book pop. The story, about a quartet of ill-fated teens who go swimming in a remote lake only to find themselves terrorised by a killer aquatic organism (which bears an unfortunate resemblance to a remote-controlled garbage bag), seems relatively simple. However, from a moral perspective, it is a far more complex prospect than “Wood’nhead”. Unlike the hoodlums of the previous tale, these kids haven’t really done anything wrong (unless you count dabbling with pot and premarital sex as offences punishable by death), but they get their comeuppance anyway. With this in mind, “The Raft” functions much on the same level as the first film’s second story, “The Lonesome Death of Jordy Verrill”, in which a backwoods farmer undergoes an agonising botanical transformation courtesy of a rogue meteorite in his front garden. Jordy’s only crime was curiosity, which this time not only killed the cat, but turned it into a piece of suicidal shrubbery. Like poor Jordy, the kids on “The Raft” simply don’t deserve their fate, a fact that doesn’t diminish the fun we have watching them get bumped off one by one. This time it turns out that we, the gleeful viewers, are the immoral ones, relishing the untimely deaths of a group of kids who are simply in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Last up is “The Hitch-hiker”, which, from an ethical standpoint, falls somewhere in between the two tales we have just witnessed. Annie is a bad girl. Or at least she is by the moral standards of the EC universe. An adulterous businesswoman with an appetite for the pleasures of the flesh, she accidentally runs down and kills a hitchhiker one dark night after a session with her favourite gigolo, but rather than stop to help, she flees the scene. Big mistake, lady. So here we have what might have been a classic EC tale – woman kills innocent hitchhiker, hitchhiker returns from the grave to take his revenge. However, the fact that Annie was on her way home from a spot of extramarital action complicates matters somewhat. What is she really being punished for; her failure to stop and tend to her unfortunate victim, or her sexual escapades? This is a far cry from





“Something to Tide You Over” from Romero’s original, which saw an adulterous wife killed by her husband, only to return from her watery grave to off him in return. In that story, the unfaithful wife was the victim, while her controlling, jealous husband was the villain. However, this time around it is the promiscuous woman who is deemed the baddie, a fact which lends a curiously conservative edge to events, surprising particularly from Romero, who is usually more progressive in his depictions of gender roles and more critical of the supposed sanctity of marriage. Still, awkward plot devices aside, it’s a nifty little yarn, taut and nasty, with a satisfying payoff, which finishes the triptych on a high.

As Meatloaf might argue, two out of three ain’t bad. But while the second and third chapters happily make up for the film’s wooden start, it is the animated wraparound story which ultimately proves to be *Creepshow 2*’s biggest misstep. An asinine tale of a young comic book fan who uses giant carnivorous plants (plants purchased from the back pages of his *Creepshow* comic) to take revenge on the local bullies, the linking story feels too infantile to succeed as a satisfying segue between tales, with its crudely rendered animation only serving to give it the feel of a Saturday morning kids show reject. Brief live action sections featuring an unrecognisable Tom Savini as The Creep fare better, leading one to wish Savini had simply appeared throughout as host, rather than swiftly disappearing in favour of the fateful animated option.

And while we are making wishes, there are two more that every *Creepshow 2* fan has; namely “The Cat from Hell” and “Pinfall”. Romero’s original script had, like the original film, five unique stories plus the wraparound, and it was the intention that the sequel would stick to this winning formula. Sadly, aforementioned budgetary restrictions meant that two of the stories had to be dropped, and “The Cat from Hell” and “Pinfall” were the unfortunate victims. The former would eventually resurface a few years later as part of the enjoyable *Tales from the Darkside: The Movie* (1990), the cinematic offshoot of the Romero-created TV anthology show of the same name, partly explaining why Tom Savini has been known to refer to the *Tales from the Darkside* film as the unofficial *Creepshow 3*. Of course, there actually was a *Creepshow 3*, made without the involvement of Romero, King, or anyone from the original team, about which the less said the better. But while *Darkside* shares structural similarities to the previous *Creepshow* films, the tales

themselves are slightly more ambitious than the pithy parables favoured by EC, and as such it feels like a distant cousin, as opposed to a close relative.

But while Romero’s killer kitty was fortunate enough to see the light of day, it is the never-produced “Pinfall” which must surely top every *Creepshow* lover’s long list of ‘if only’s’. Based on a King story of the same name, Romero’s original screenplay placed the tale in between “Old Chief Wood’head” and “The Raft”, and was to be introduced by an excitable Creep as such:

*‘Still here, kiddies? Well, if Old Chief Wood’nhead didn’t drive you away, you might enjoy this next splintering tale whittled from the same worm-wood, a gruesome little revenge story, short, sweet and...heh, heh, heh....striking! I call this one....PINFALL.’*

What was then supposed to ensue was the sorry tale of two rival bowling teams both competing for the championship trophy. But when one of the team falls victim to a spot of murderous foul play, the vengeful bowlers return from the grave to take revenge on their competitive assailants.

A familiar tale of moral just deserts, “Pinfall” offered another riff on the vengeful zombie trope familiar to the *Creepshow* series. But while the overarching narrative offered little thematic innovation, the prospect of an entire bowling team of the unforgiving undead is just too delicious a prospect to easily forget about. One of the main shortcomings of *Creepshow 2* is that it’s just over too quickly (and how many films can that be said about?), so it is hard not to dwell on what might have been. But if the money wasn’t there, the money wasn’t there, and we’ll just have to make do with what we were given (and take comfort in the fantastic comic adaptation which features as part of this edition!). Still, if we were only allowed three, one can’t help but wonder what might have been had they ditched old Wood’head in favour of these bad sports...

So there we have it, kiddies. *Creepshow 2* might be a touch lopsided. It may well be too short, and a bit on the cheap side. Hell, it might even be downright bad at times. But while it is a film that is easy to criticise, somehow it is a film that is almost impossible to dislike. When not held up next to the masterful original,



Gornick's sole feature film effort has a lot going for it. So let's stop complaining about what's missing, or what could have been done better, and focus on what we have; a gleefully nasty little portmanteau with more wit and imagination in its finest moments than a lot of horror movies can muster over their entire running time. Oh, and let us not forget, the greatest floating killer trash bag in the history of cinema.

*Michael Blyth is a film programmer for the BFI London Film Festival and BFI Flare: London LGBT Film Festival.*



## ABOUT THE RESTORATION

*Creepshow 2* has been exclusively restored in 2K resolution for this release by Arrow Films and is presented in its original theatrical aspect ratio of 1.85:1 with mono, stereo 2.0 and 5.1 audio options.

The original 35mm Interpositive was scanned in 2K resolution on a pin-registered 4K Lasergraphics Director Scanner at Deluxe Burbank. Picture grading was completed on a DaVinci Resolve at Pinewood Studios. Thousands of instances of dirt, debris and light scratches were removed using PFClean software. Overall image stability and instances of density fluctuation were also improved. All restoration work was completed at Pinewood Studios.

The original soundtrack was transferred from the 35mm magnetic master reels by Deluxe Audio Services, Los Angeles, and was conformed and restored at Pinewood Studios.

Restoration Supervised by **James White, Arrow Films**

Materials made available by **Mike Lechner, Lakeshore Entertainment**

Deluxe Burbank Film Scanning services: **Cheryl Frohlich, Jeff Gaetano**

Deluxe Audio services: **Jordan Perry**

Restoration services by **Pinewood Studios:**

Colour grading: **Michael Davis**

Restoration Technicians: **Lucie Hancock, Rob Langridge, Jake Chapman**

Audio Conform: **Jason Stevens**

Conform & Deliverables: **Leigh Reid**

Restoration Department Management: **Jon Mann, Philip Lee**

## PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and Booklet Produced by **Ewan Cant**

Executive Producers **Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni**

Production Assistant **Liane Cunje**

Technical Producer **James White**

QC Manager **Nora Mehenni**

Authoring **Digital Cinema United**

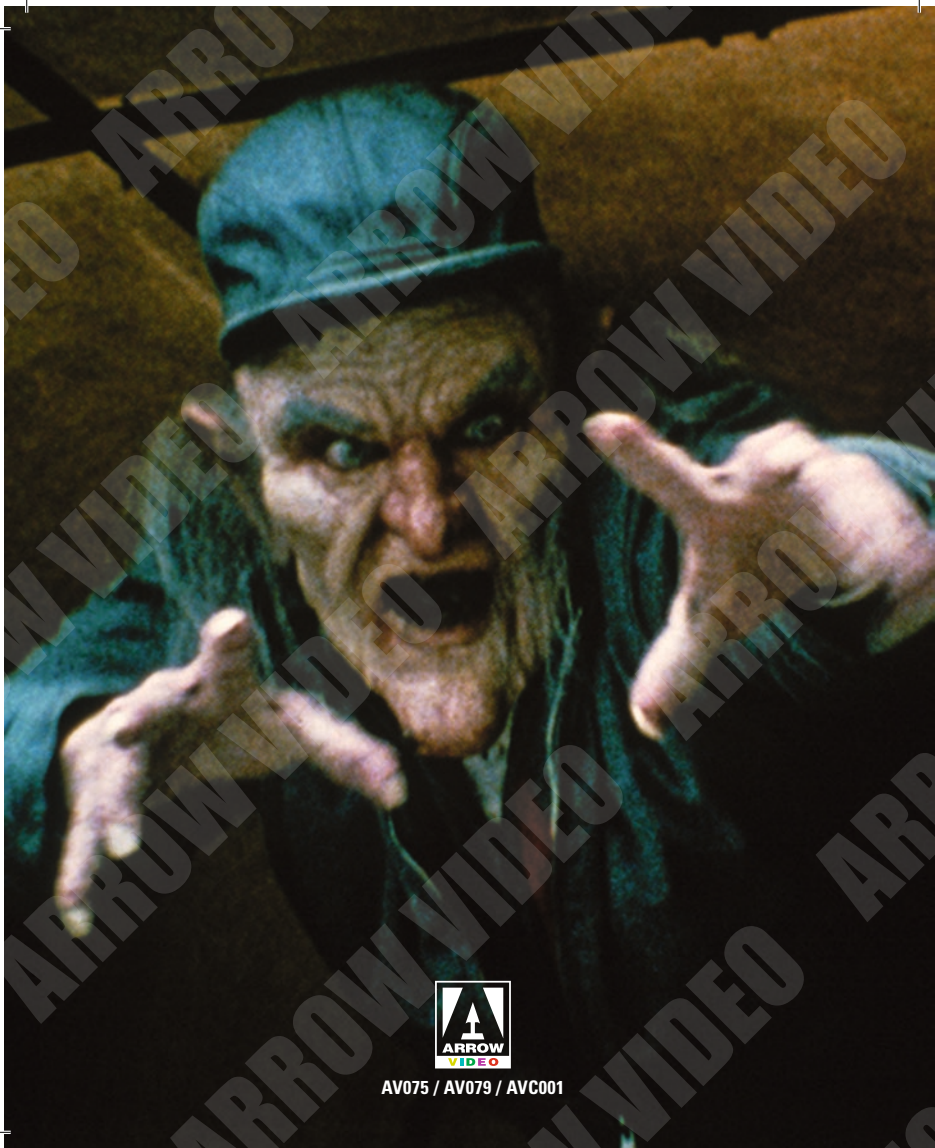
Artist **Mike Saputo**

Design **Obviously Creative**

## SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, Daniel Beer, Michael Felsher, Jason Mayoh, Barbara McCarney, George A. Romero, Tom Savini and Tom Wright.





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