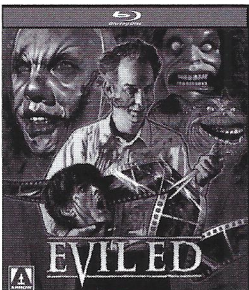


EVIL ED

Directed by Anders Jacobsson
(1995) Arrow Video
Blu-ray/DVD combo



Studios film editor Edward Tor Swenson (Johan Rudebeck) finds his life at European Distributors going berserk when he's unexpectedly loaned out to the company's "Splatter & Gore" department. Run by the sleazy Sam Campbell (Olof Rhodin), whose acquisition of the *Loose Limbs* horror series has

been a sizable money-spinner, the garish division falls well outside of Ed's comfort zone. His assignment? To pare back all the graphic sex and violence from the series with view to making them palatable for more sensitive (and lucrative) foreign markets.

Although given only the vaguest of guidelines regarding his duties, Ed swiftly takes to the role like a censor to scissors. So much so that Campbell decides to shift Ed to a private editing suite, housed within his isolated holiday chalet, to dedicate all his time to work uninterrupted. But being constantly exposed to such a relentless dirge of graphic material, the diminutive Ed soon finds his perceptions of fantasy and reality begin to blur. Locked away, with no pressure outlet, it's not long thereafter that his (now) warped mind turns to thoughts of mutilation and murder.

Springing forth from a decade that gave us *The Silence of the Lambs* (1990) and *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), as well as *Braindead* (1992) and *Killer Tongue* (1996), Anders Jacobsson's horror-comedy *Evil Ed* (1995) holds a stronger affinity with a reckless Kiwi indie from the previous decade than any of its nineties peers. Akin to Peter Jackson's raucous *Bad Taste* (1978), Jacobsson's film is the unlikely collaboration of a bunch of friends, who, with almost no planning and even less money, decided to make a movie. Thereby it's a testament to the enthusiasm (and ultimate success) of the collective involved that the film still holds up, continues to remain a talking point amongst genre fans, and even saw an updated edition released in its home country Sweden to celebrate the film's twentieth anniversary.

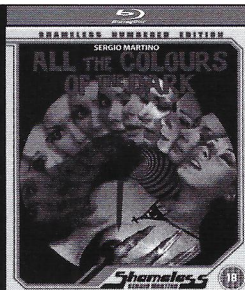
Born out of an attempt by Jacobsson and friends to mount a higher budgeted feature that ultimately fell through, *Evil Ed* found its inspiration in an old abandoned script called *The Censor*. A satire on both the (then) stringent hand of the Swedish *State Cinema Agency* (which dissolved a year after the film's release) and the tired old fallacy of "fictional violence triggering its real-life equivalent," *Ed's* arguably not the tome of hilarity you'd expect—but it certainly has its moments amidst the varied distractions. The decision to shoot in English (with subsequent "Americanized" dubbing provided by *Bandit Radio* in post-production) for purely commercial reasons undoubtedly hinders the end result. Yet, akin to the film's unusual editing rhythms (that grew out of three years of post), the oft-stilted dialogue only adds to the surreal appeal of Jacobsson's bizarre comedy.

On the opposite side of the fence from a narrative that grew in the editing suite from two years of successive reshoots, and performances that range from wooden to downright embarrassing, *Evil Ed* holds enough remaining substance to entertain the adventurous genre fan. Jacobsson's colorful, exquisitely lit 16mm photography is eye-popping and Göran Lundström's (*X-Men: First Class*, 2011) special makeup effects are slick, professional and often quite jarring. There's a few surprises along the way, such as an amusing little monster in Ed's refrigerator, a smattering of gratuitous nudity, and an unsettling moment referred to by the filmmakers as "Bondage Face". Per Löfberg (*Frostbite*, 2006) and Camela Leierth, as office kids Nick and Mel, and Cecilia Ljung (*An Angel's Patience*, 2001), as Ed's oddball wife Barbara also star.

It goes without saying that, as a feature film undertaken with no other end goal than to see it exhibited in Swedish cinemas, *Evil Ed* has its fair share of flaws. A four-week shoot that led to three years of additional photography and post-production tends to show through at almost every turn as well as leaving the film flat and sluggish in its mid-section. The performances, all post-synched, are really something to behold and don't work anywhere near as well as the over the top theatrics of similar efforts. But it looks great, has some enjoyably squishy effects, and closes out on one of the most irritating monologues I've ever heard (this one might kill it for some viewers). But Jacobsson's feature debut is it what is, and, behind the scenes calamity considered, is something of a miracle to have been completed at all. Well worth a look as a signpost of what else was going on in the world during one of horror's less-eventful (and video-swamped) decades.

As for Arrow Video's dual US and UK three-disc Blu-ray & DVD release? If you're any kind of fan of *Evil Ed*, or even a newcomer, you absolutely need to snap up this special edition ASAP. It offers both cuts of the film, in pristine condition, and more extras than you can poke half a dozen sticks at (inclusive of a juggernaut three hour "Making Of" featurette accompanying the theatrical cut). Easily one of the most mind-blowing packages for a film you'd never expect such excess lavished on.

Michael Thomason



ALL THE COLORS OF THE DARK

Directed by Sergio Martino
(1972) Shameless Blu-ray (import)

If you've ever enjoyed horror, fantasy and/or post-apocalyptic action heyday of the late 70s through the early 90s, you're sure to have encountered the work of the prolific Sergio Martino: such well-remembered titles as *Slave of the Cannibal God*, *Screamers*, *The Great Alligator* and *After the Fall of New York* represent only a portion of his directorial output.

After a stint in documentary filmmaking, Martino began his feature career in earnest in 1970 with a series of *giallo* thrillers as popularized (though not actually invented) by Dario Argento via *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*. Martino's third such outing (following *The Strange Vice of Mrs. Wardh* and *The Case of the Scorpion's Tail*), however, played far less as a typical *giallo* and more as an exercise in surrealism and paranoia inspired by a certain supernatural breakthrough from Roman Polanski. Nor would it be at all out of line to describe the London-set *All the Colors of the Dark* as *Rosemary's Baby* . . . without the baby. And that's because our protagonist Jane Harrison (Edwige Fenech) recently lost hers in a traumatic traffic accident. And as much as her boyfriend Richard (George Hilton had previously co-starred with Fenech in the aforementioned *Vice* and without her in *Tail*) tries to comfort her and assuage her guilty conscience, he can do nothing to stem the subsequent tide of increasingly bizarre and frightening dreams in which Jane is stalked by a menacing, knife-wielding Ivan Rassimov.

The plot, as adapted by Ernesto Gastaldi from a story by Santiago Moncada (a Spanish terror specialist who scripted such haunting oddities as *The Swamp of the Ravens* and *A Bell from Hell*) plays it closely to the Ira Levin/Roman Polanski model by offering Jane such down-to-earth assurances as those provided by her own sister, a highly-recommended therapist, or even a lawyer ("Alan Collins" is a pseudonym for the beloved character actor Luciano Pigozzi of *The Castle of the Living Dead*) who phones out of the blue to offer some apparently valuable information; only to have each avenue lead relentlessly back to Rassimov (now apparently quite capable of pursuing and injuring Jane during her waking hours). With no relief to the terror in sight, Jane is even willing to take the advice of her new neighbor (Marina Malfatti), who suggests that a black-magic ritual with a secret coven would be *just* the thing to liberate Jane from her fears. Unsurprisingly, such is not the case.

All the Colors of the Dark proved one of Martino's strongest early showings: while the story ultimately disappoints (more on that later), the combination of relentless, psychedelic hallucinations, grim horror and jaw-dropping sex appeal (courtesy of the completely uninhibited Fenech in the main) truly put the director on the map. Nevertheless, it took a while for that to be acknowledged on this side of the Atlantic due to a confusing and frustrating release history. Sam Sherman's Independent-International Pictures released the film in the States under the title *They're Coming to get You*. And in what was either a conscientious decision or a happy accident, some venues ended up running the film without its final reel. That may scarcely sound like a selling point, but all viewers missed in this case was a pedantic, plot-heavy and highly unlikely "real" explanation for all that had gone on previously: the downbeat "ending" as exhibited thus actually fit the film far more appropriately! But only Sherman's theatrical viewers got to see the film at (almost) full-strength. The VHS release known as *Day of the Maniac* suffered from severe image cropping back in the days when letterboxing was considered a bitter nuisance by most home viewers; while any appeal left in that version was censored into oblivion by the TV print sold as *Demons of the Dead*.

Shriek Show previously released the uncut film on DVD in both English and Italian-language versions, but the limited edition Blu-ray from Shameless raises the stakes in restored color and picture quality—while providing yet another anomaly of its own. In order to get the best-looking master of the film, Shameless utilized a Spanish print: the movie itself is the same and is still available in both English and Italian (watching the film in English with the optional English subtitles turned on illuminates many an interesting difference in dialogue between the shooting script and the English dub, the better to match the lip movements); but the opening and end titles play in Spanish and with different imagery than that seen in the original Italian version. Also exclusive to the Shriek Show release is the alternate *They're Coming to get You* title sequence, which is yet another different kettle of fish. So in order to further tempt potential customers who may already have this title in their possession, Shameless supplies a feature audio commentary by Kat Ellinger and Sann Deighan of *Diabolique* magazine and an all-new half-hour interview with Sergio Martino himself (focusing in detail on the story behind the film on display). The award-winning 2012 short film *Doors* (woman finds herself trapped between two doors when attempting to exit her apartment building—you'll probably figure it out before she does) is included as a bonus along with a selection of trailers and promos. The viewer will have to weigh the pros and cons of each release before making a choice, but *All the Colors of the Dark* is a title to reckon with regardless.

Shane M. Dallmann