

her program due to her involvement with leftist protest groups, and Iraj is a doctor called to help the cause in Ilam, where most of the fighting is taking place. After he leaves, a missile strikes their building and decimates the top floor. Subsequently, Dorsa begins to act erratically; she can't sleep, she's acting out, and she's become unusually attached to her doll. When it goes missing, she says that a Djinn has taken it and is tormenting her; Shideh initially writes it off as a fantasy brought on by stress. But at a certain point, she must listen to the desperate pleading of her child, and confront the evil being tearing apart her home.

Without its supernatural elements, *Under the Shadow* would still be a frightening movie. There's a palpable unease from start to finish, especially during the nail-biting sequences when everyone in the apartment complex must run to the basement during air raids. It's immediately apparent how hard-shelled the parents must be in order to adapt and survive, particularly Shideh, as the film quickly focuses on her. Between being caught in the political upheaval, having to pause her medical studies to help her family, and constantly struggling to keep her daughter safe, she's a layered and fascinating matriarchal hero.

Where Anvari's film falls short is in its reliance on jump-scares, which cheapens a story that already provides a wealth of horrors, especially considering he's so effectively subtle in painting his characters. If the movie didn't get bogged down by shadowy beasts jumping out of the darkness occasionally, it would be impenetrable. Regardless, *Under the Shadow* is powerful storytelling in the way it terrifies us with the reality of its world.

RICHELLE CHARKOT

## SLASHBACK TO THE '80S

### LAKE NOWHERE

Starring Wray Villanova, Laura Hajek and Nathan Andrew Wright

Directed by Christopher Phelps and Maxim Van Scoy

Written by Ryan Scott Fitzgerald, Christopher Phelps and Stephen Phelps

BrinkVision

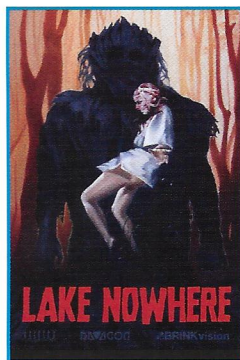
Back in 2009, Ti West released *The House of the Devil*, his attempt to replicate the look and feel of a 1980s horror movie. Though West probably had no idea at the time, he was firing the opening salvo in what would soon become something of a minor battle in the horror world: who could best recreate not just the aesthetics, but the experience of watching a rented fright flick on a crummy VHS? The latest effort, Christopher Phelps and Maxim Van Scoy's *Lake Nowhere* isn't quite the masterpiece of the



Lake Nowhere

subgenre, but it comes very close.

A group of friends arrive at a lakeside cabin to indulge in a bit of summertime hedonism, only to be set upon by a nameless, faceless killer



who begins picking them off one by one in grisly sex-'n'-death set pieces. To Phelps and Van Scoy's credit, that's about all there is to the movie – taking a cue from the classic slashers, there's no attempt to engage in the sort of postmodern social commentary or trope subversion that would date *Nowhere* as a contemporary flick. Combined with the shot-on-video look – in terms of film stock aesthetics, *Nowhere* definitely wins the contest, though several

characters wear distinctly modern eyeglasses – the movie comes incredibly close to looking like a genuine time-capsule piece. Unfortunately, the duo falls into the same trap that West did by being a little too polished for their own good. Everyone who loves old slashers must admit that they weren't the best-made or most intelligent movies ever produced, but there are times that *Nowhere* is just a little too good to masquerade as a legitimate '80s slasher. Minutes-long sequences that take place in almost total silence lend it an eerie, meditative feeling when it's clearly meant to be tongue-in-cheek. In particular, the sequence leading up to the first murder – which cross-cuts between a game of cards, a vigorous balling session and the approach of the killer – is incongruously tense and beautifully filmed, and belongs in a more serious movie.

*Lake Nowhere* is preceded by a pair of fake trailers, neither of which capture the aesthetics of the late '70s/early '80s in quite the same way as the main attraction, and don't adequately prepare the viewer for the experience of the film. Regardless, nostalgia freaks and retro-horror fans are sure to find this a fun way to kill an hour.

PRESTON FASSEL

## THERE'S A KILLER ON THE ROAD

### THE MONSTER

Starring Ella Ballentine, Zoe Kazan and Aaron Douglas

Written and directed by Bryan Bertino

Unbroken Pictures

Edwin Rolfe and Lester Fuller would not have been very good at marketing modern horror movies. Not that they should be. After all, they were the writers of the 1946 murder mystery *Murder in the Glass Room*, in which they coined the phrase "You can never tell a book by its cover." In this day and age, however, when horror fans are deluged with more releases than they can ever watch, you should be able to tell a lot about a movie by its cover. And that's a very roundabout way of saying that *The Monster* – a movie with a forgettable title and innocuous poster – probably won't get the attention it deserves.

A polished little creature feature written and directed by Bryan Bertino, who also wrote and directed *The Strangers*, it follows waste-case trailer park mom Kathy (Zoe Kazan) as she drives her daughter, Lizzy (Ella Ballentine), to her father's house. The tense road trip takes a turn for the much worse when they hit a wolf and get stranded at night in rainstorm. Seems the animal was being pursued by a big, toothy creature that turns its attention to the promise of mother-daughter morsels. A tow-truck driver serves as a suitable appetizer while also giving our heroes a possible escape vehicle. But it's not gonna be that easy, of course.

Young Lizzy will have to be resourceful and

