

violent outbursts. News of dad having an affair doesn't help, and Andy feels the brunt of his ever-maddening mother's rage. But Maryann senses that something else is off. Discovering the horrific details that have been eluding her and the audience alike, she takes matters into her own hands and

unravels the secrets that have been keeping Andy a prisoner in his own home.

The Harvest isn't poised to match *Henry's* lasting stamp on the horror genre. It is, however, a better-than-average effort that slyly busted the expectations of this reviewer. What the two do have in common



is tension - unbearable, stomach-turning tension, much of which sits on the furrowed brow of Michael Shannon. Shaking his Dick-Tracy-villainesque presence in favour of a softer, more emotion-driven performance, his portrayal of a father torn between some extremely hard choices does plenty to anchor the smouldering drama that unfolds at its own slow-burning pace. The rest of the cast is excellent as well. Thematically and technically, this is mature stuff deserving of serious viewing, and praise for its accomplished director.

TAL ZIMERMAN

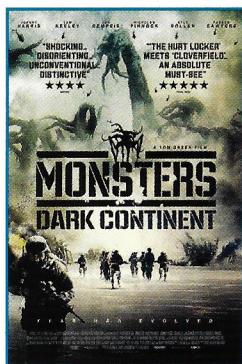
THE WAR ON CREATURES

MONSTERS: DARK CONTINENT

Starring Johnny Harris, Sam Keeley and Joe Dempsie
Directed by Tom Green
Written by Tom Green and Jay Basu
Anchor Bay

"The Dark Continent" is an anachronism for Africa, so titling a film set in the Middle East *Monsters: Dark Continent* is just plain stupid. That may not be the decision of director and co-writer Tom Green (the British filmmaker who worked on the TV series *Misfits*, not the Canadian comedian who once had lesbian pornography airbrushed on the hood of his father's car), so you can't fault him for that. But he does need to answer for making a film with *Monsters* in the title, in which the actual monsters are of so little relevance you could remove them entirely without altering the plot.

The 2010 prequel *Monsters* (see *RM#59*) by Gareth Edwards is focused on the relationship drama between two strangers trying to escape creature-infested Central America. The monsters act as a metaphor but they also drive the plot and are responsible for some genuinely terrifying moments. *Dark Continent*, set ten years later, uses them for set dressing as we follow a group of friends from Detroit who join the army to fight insurgents in the Middle East. Their veteran commanding officer leads them



on a rescue mission in the desert but the soldiers' convoy is taken out by an IED (improvised explosive device) and the survivors are taken prisoner. They escape and try to complete their mission while facing enemies, the sun-scorched landscape and their own mental strain. Notice I didn't mention monsters in there...

The creatures, which are massive, wonderfully realistic Lovecraftian beasts kinda just hang out. We see young ones running beside the road, some of the big ones are taken out with missiles, a kid has a newborn one in a box, and a couple of the behemoths walk past the building that the soldiers are being held in, providing just enough of a distraction for them to escape - the closest the monsters come to affecting the plot. Although Green shows himself to be a talented filmmaker who gets some gorgeous shots and powerful performances, *Monsters: Dark Continent* is a big ol' bait 'n' switch for horror fans, like watching a *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* movie in which the chainsaw sits on a shelf the entire film.

Do the math: *Monsters* minus monsters equals zero.

DAVE ALEXANDER

BOLLYWOOD HORRORS

DESPITE THE GODS

Starring Jennifer Lynch, Mallika Sherawat and Sydney Lynch
Directed by Penny Vozniak
BrinkVision

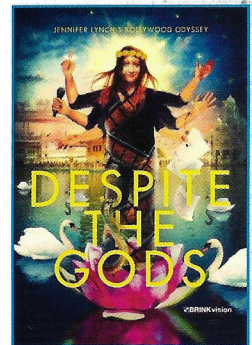
Some people just don't have any luck.

In the mid-2000s, Jennifer Lynch was given a monumental task with potentially far-reaching consequences: she was to travel to India and take part in a first-of-its-kind cross-production to bring American-style horror filmmaking to Bollywood. Had the project succeeded, it would have heralded a new age of collaboration between the best minds in Western and

Eastern horror cinema. Instead, what should have been a few weeks long shoot turned into a nine-month ordeal, culminating in Lynch losing the promised final cut of her film. Nonetheless, the endeavour did give us something just as fascinating: *Despite the Gods*, a fly-on-the-wall documentary about the film (finally out on DVD and VOD from BrinkVision).

Arriving in India with a vision for a sexy, scary, culturally relevant thriller, Lynch quickly discovers that Bollywood is ruled by a much different ethos than its Western counterpart: camera trucks arrive to set sans equipment, the film's sex symbol (Sherawat) faces blacklisting if she's too sexy and Lynch's daughter becomes the de facto set nurse when cast members suffer heat stroke. The zenith of madness occurs when a production assistant informs Lynch that she's sort of allowed to kill her stuntmen, as they believe dying in service to their country's film industry guarantees them reincarnation as a higher life form. As the schedule balloons and Lynch's Western liberalism clashes with India's hardcore conservatism, her crew decides to stage a mutiny and hijack the project.

There's one particular thing that keeps *Gods* from achieving the level of documentary classic: the lack of a narrator. Several crew members refused permission to be shown onscreen (a roadblock responsible for the lack of extras on the disc), and as a result there are multiple unexplained holes in the narrative. A narrator could have filled those holes; instead, certain parts of the movie drag as the audience watches seemingly inconsequential events unfolding, or only gets to witness the aftermath of something big that happened off screen and is never fully explained. Regardless, *Gods* ultimately rises above these limitations in a profound way. It provides not only a glimpse into how horror is achieved and perceived in another part of the world, but also forces the viewer to see our horror entertainment through the lens of another



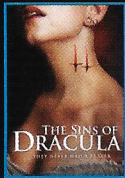
Despite the Gods



OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE LAPS UP SOME RE-IMAGINED MONSTERS

A ROLE YOU CAN SINK YOUR TEETH INTO



THE SINS OF DRACULA

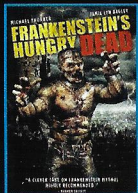
MVD Visual

For horror fans of any age, there's nothing like sitting back and watching the classic films that started it all: the black and white *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *The Mummy*. Unfortunately, these classics have been reissued, recycled and re-imagined *ad nauseam* so studios can make a quick buck on a fan favourite. Case in point: *The Sins of Dracula*. Though this movie features an actor in the role of Dracula who does his best to channel the late John Carradine, the fact that the movie is about a Devil-worshipping theatre troupe trying to make a musical version of the 1978 Jonestown Massacre and resurrect Drac, leaves a lot to be desired. It might just make you wish someone would come along and drive stakes through both your eyeballs.

BODY COUNT: 16

BEST VAMPIRE DEATH: Wooden stake through the ass

GROUNDING FOR LIFE



FRANKENSTEIN'S HUNGRY DEAD

Wildeye Releasing

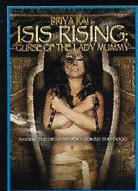
I'm one of those people who thought the monster in *Frankenstein* was actually called "Frankenstein." Yes, I sniffed a lot of glue as a kid and did poorly in school. But as punishment I was never sent to a wax museum like the six kids in this movie. And, they like it so much that they later break back in, only to discover that the nefarious proprietor, Dr. Frankenstein, has been making zombies of their classmates. The special effects are tolerable at best but peppered with very questionable CGI, and

I'm guessing the cast members were paid in cheeseburgers and methadone, as they look like they're tweaking. Overall, *Frankenstein's Hungry Dead* will leave you wishing someone would stitch your eyes closed.

BODY COUNT: 14

BEST FRANKENSTEIN DEATH: Electrical eyeball explosion

PYRAMID SCHEME



ISIS RISING: CURSE OF THE LADY MUMMY

MVD Visual

When your resume boasts *Mommy Got Boobs 2* and *Jack's Big Tit Show Part 9*, I'm guessing your acting chops are not your biggest assets and making the move to horror must have been a tough choice. Starring the staggeringly well-endowed Priya Rai as the, ahem, titular Lady Mummy, this cinematic catastrophe follows Egyptology students who mistakenly re-animate the corpse of a goddess, who then goes on a limb-ripping rampage, trying to rebuild the body of her dead lover. If I made that sound cool, I apologize, because the styrofoam sets, shitty CGI and the fact that Isis has a voice like a broken robot will make you wish someone would blindfold you with bandages and leave you in the desert.

BODY COUNT: 12

BEST MUMMY DEATH: Dismembered during a hand-job

LAST CHANCE LANCE

culture, with the results being not always entirely flattering. It may not be the full cultural exchange we might've gotten had things turned out different, but it's the next best thing.

PRESTON FASSEL

LOSE THE FOUND FOOTAGE

GHOUL

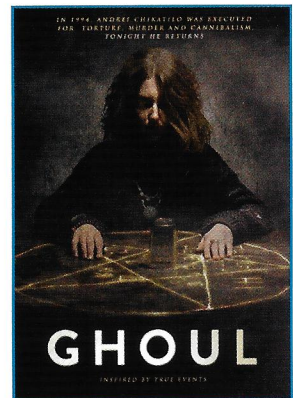
Starring Jennifer Armour, Alina Golovyola and Jeremy Isabella

Directed by Petr Jaki

Written by Petr Jaki and Petr Bok Vega, Baby!

Dude, found footage? Again? *Seriously?* Because as much as I was blown away by the ingenuity of *The Blair Witch Project* and the visceral power of the first *Paranormal Activity*, this method has been so over(ab) used in recent years, I'd rather spend a weekend alone in the Burkittsville woods with no food or porn than sit through this tired-ass gimmick again. If you have more patience for this kind of thing than I, the recent Czech/American production *Ghoul* might hold your interest. Then again, it still might not.

Russian serial killer Andrei Chikatilo, who murdered more than 50 people between 1978 and 1990 in southern Russia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, has been the subject of two previous films, one great (*Citizen X*, 1995) and one so-so (*Evilenko*, 2004). *Ghoul*, on the other hand, isn't fact-based; while Chikatilo is connected to the plot (and I won't spoil that element), this is essentially a ghost story in which an American movie crew travels to the Ukraine to shoot a doc about another prolific serial killer who first resorted to cannibalism during the Ukrainian famine of 1932, then continued



to nosh on the locals after perogies became plentiful again. The filmmakers land in Kiev, hook up with a decidedly sketchy guide (who's constantly asking for more money), a gorgeous translator and a standard-issue twitchy psychic and head deep into the woods to a house that's the alleged site of multiple murders. Seances, makeshift ouija board fuckery, arguments and hookups ensue for about an hour, then people lose their minds and chase each other around in the dark and get killed. There are some genuine jump-scares, but that's such an easy ploy with the found-footage conceit that it does little to alleviate our seen-it-all-before issues.

It's worth noting that one of *Ghoul's* executive producers is Rob Cohen, a Hollywood veteran who directed *The Skulls* (2000) and *The Fast and the Furious* (2001). The former provoked the most impassioned booring I've ever heard in a movie theatre; the latter was so bad I called my best friend at 2 a.m., woke him up and made him watch part of it, just because. *Ghoul* is, if nothing else, a step up from both, so I suppose that qualifies as a semblance of progress.

JOHN W. BOWEN