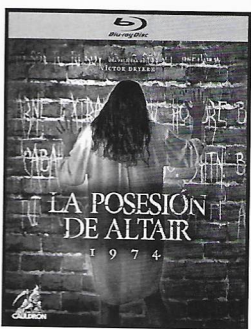


his flirtations. Elvis briefly shifts into action mode during the final reel, tackling an armed rapist, but most of the time he and his nurses are just tending to zonked-out addicts, aiding a stammering teen or miraculously curing an autistic little girl. Eventually our incognito nuns get into hot water with their stodgy male superiors due to such inappropriate behavior as calling out a dishonest grocery store cashier (Timothy Carey) and pushing back against a local loan shark (Robert Emhardt). Amongst its supporting cast, Ed Asner plays an ingratiating Police Lieutenant, Irene gets hassled by Bill Elliott and Ji-Tu Cumbuka, plus Ruth McDevitt and Doro Merande are gossipy biddies who think our nuns are actually hookers. William A. Graham, whose career ranged from GUYANA TRAGEDY: THE STORY OF JIM JONES to RETURN TO THE BLUE LAGOON, provides workmanlike direction... The Blu-ray includes a commentary by Howard S. Berger and Nathaniel Thompson.

The 'found-footage horror' sub-genre has gotten a justifiably bad rap over the years, due to creatively-barren filmmakers searching for an easy way to make a quick buck. One notable exception



is the paranormal period piece **1974: LA POSESION DE ALTAIR (Cauldron)**, a highly ingenious 2016 Mexican feature shot almost entirely on Super 8, which succeeds due to its intense lead performances and writer-director Victor Dryere's meticulous attention to detail.

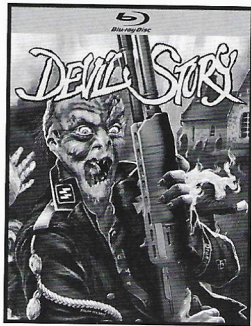
The story revolves around happy young newlyweds Altair (Diana Bovio) and Manuel (Rolando Breme), with hubbie using his 8mm camera to capture everyday activities in their new home. The opening minutes introduce us to the pair as they hang out together and celebrate Altair's birthday with friends. But events take a disturbing turn one night, when Altair claims to see a figure, calling himself an angel, lurking near their bed. Manuel chalks it up to a dream, although Altair is convinced it actually happened. Soon afterward, they receive odd phone calls, a flock of birds crashes into the house, their puppy goes missing, and dazed Altair becomes dangerously self-destructive, while also obediently following bizarre building instructions passed onto her by these so-called angels. As this unnerving situation spirals into ever darker directions, worried Manuel seeks help from a close friend (to operate his camera) and Altair's older sister (who reveals a traumatic childhood incident possibly linked to her current plight). Meanwhile, Dryere cleverly makes all of this resemble old, handheld home movies — splices, scratches, overexposed flashes, the camera running out of film — while littering the story with era-specific trappings and fashions. It's all quite inventive, with a skillful build-up of suspense, several unsettling moments, and jump scares that never feel overly cheesy, though like so many found footage efforts, concrete answers remain illusive and its set-up is far more effective than the ultimate pay-off. The Blu-ray includes a featurette on the film's sound design and a CD soundtrack.

Gothic horror doesn't get much more impressively creepy or atmospheric than **MILL OF THE STONE WOMEN [Il Mulino Delle Donne di Pietra] (Arrow Video)**, a colorful 1960 Italian-French co-production directed by Giorgio Ferroni (who later shifted to peplums like THE LION OF THEBES and THE TROJAN HORSE). In the 19th century, writer Hans von Arnium (Pierre Brice)

arrives at a small Dutch village and locates the windmill residence of Gregorius Wahl (Herbert Böhme), which the locals refer to as the "Mill of the Stone Women" due to this artist's collection of life-size female sculptures. Hans is preparing a paper about his host's unique work — witnessing how Wahl has adapted

his windmill's old grinding mechanism into a type of grotesque carousel which propels his life-like statues throughout a theatrical display — but also becomes instantly intrigued by a fleeting glimpse of Wahl's lovely adult daughter (Scilla Gabel). According to her father, Elfie suffers from a rare, potentially-deadly illness, but that doesn't stop Hans from being lured into her boudoir late one night, with this reclusive beauty soon jealous of Hans' longtime affection for female friend Liselotte (Dany Carrel). The film's second half gets substantially looper, with Hans drugged by Elfie's sinister physician (Wolfgang Preiss), leading to trippy imagery, escalating paranoia and a grim secret kept by Wahl and Elfie's doctor, complete with a mad scientist-style lab and pretty, unwilling victims. Although the performances are far from subdued, they work well within the film's increasingly frenzied storyline — Liselotte ultimately endangered and Hans determined to stop Wahl — but it's the vibrant color cinematography and lush Hammer-style production design that make this Grand Guignol tale of a father's twisted love so memorably freaky... The two-disc Limited Edition is a gorgeous set that includes a 60-page booklet, poster and six lobby card reproduction postcards, plus four versions of the film — Italian and English (96m), US (95m) and French (90m) — a commentary by Tim Lucas, and archival interviews with cast members Preiss and Liana Orfei.

Writer-director Bernard Launois proved that the US didn't hold a monopoly on hilariously incoherent, technically inept, shoestring schlock with 1986's **DEVIL STORY [Il Était Une Fois le Diable] (Vinegar Syndrome)**, an outrageous,



gore-strewn horror hodgepodge from France... The film opens with some shuffling, misshapen guy in an old German SS jacket, as he slaughters a couple innocent campers and tosses their still-sputtering-fake-blood bodies down a well, then offs a family that runs out of petrol about 25 meters from where this fiend happens to be lurking. After that goofy prologue, we meet a married couple forced to stay the night at a sprawling castle (with Bach's "Tocata and Fugue in D minor" blasting whenever its exterior is shown) due to problems with their car (which inexplicably has Florida license plates?), with lovely Véronique Renaud starring as the neurotic basketcase wife. Meanwhile, the château's elderly caretakers tend to babble about bizarre deaths and catastrophes that have occurred during this exact time of year — the Equinox! It's difficult to adequately convey this astounding concoction's non-stop nuttiness, as our grunting murderer and his mom dispose of

corpses, an ominous black horse randomly gallops around the area and high-strung Renaud traipses about after-dark in her shorty nightie. Not ludicrous enough for you? Just wait until a long-buried English clipper ship suddenly erupts from the earth and liberates its Cairo cargo, with a resurrected, goop-oozing mummy soon stiffly wandering the French countryside. Though only 76 minutes long, scenes stretch on and on, with the castle caretaker spending most of the film's second half absurdly standing in the middle of a field, unsuccessfully trying to blast the aforementioned horse with his shotgun. Still, any potential boredom is easily outweighed by DEVIL STORY's unintentional laughs, lack of continuity, slapdash effects, and some of the absolute worst acting outside of just about any Andy Milligan flick... The Blu-ray includes a career interview with Launois, a director's commentary for select scenes, French TV coverage of the film, and a 2010 featurette in which Renaud returns to the production's Normandy locations and recalls how aghast she was after her initial viewing of the movie.

In the early-1970s, on-screen senior citizens were mostly portrayed as irascible eccentrics in the Ruth Gordon mold. One of the rare exceptions was director Larry Yust's **HOMEBODIES (Kino Lorber Studio Classics)**, a grim little 1974 treat featuring an ensemble of skilled veteran character actors in a story involving murder, revenge, urban gentrification, and an unflinching look at how shabby society's most vulnerable individuals are treated by the wealthy and powerful... In downtown Cincinnati, the elderly are being tossed out of their longtime homes by greedy landlords and heartless politicians, in order to demolish



these buildings and make way for corporate high-rises. But one determined group of senior neighbors decides to band together and refuse eviction, even though the city threatens to shut off their power, gas and water in order to force them out. After a nearby workman's accidental death on the job gets them a day's reprieve from the wrecking ball, our old-timers hatch a wicked scheme to buy them additional time — leading to a construction crew's 'accidental' demise when their elevator abruptly plummets to the ground. Our desperate seniors include a married couple (Ian Wolfe, Ruth McDevitt), a dotty shut-in (Frances Fuller), a literary pack rat (William Hensen), and Peter Brocco as blind-yet-incredibly-resourceful Mr. Blakely, while the film's standout is Paula Trueman (THE OUTLAW JOSEY WALES) as outwardly sweet li'l ol' Mattie, who's the most ruthlessly resolute of them all — particularly when her colleagues begin to get cold feet as their death toll rises. Amongst its non-AARP cast members, Kenneth Tobey pops up as a construction boss and Linda Marsh is particularly despicable as the city's relocation agent. Though not without a few moments of grisly, pitch black humor, Yust wisely maintains a palpable level of gritty reality throughout and gives each aged character their own distinct personality — keeping them sympathetic, even when at their most calculating and bloodthirsty — with the second half veering into increasingly dark territory. Aided immeasurably by Isidore Mankofsky's cinematography, this is a unique and uncompromising triumph. The Blu-ray includes a Yust commentary and an interview with producer Marshal Backlar.