



LE FANTÔME DE LA LIBERTÉ (THE PHANTOM OF LIBERTY)

Luis Buñuel (CRITERION)

One of Buñuel's most willfully surreal comedies, this popular late-career work from 1974 takes its time to clue the audience in on the joke. Once hipped, the stream of dizzy images and warped icons, constantly splitting off into schizophrenic tributaries, becomes a Dada sitcom with no beginning and no end. Not the best title from Buñuel's filmography (that would be *The Exterminating Angel*), but maybe the funniest, with a different message for each viewer every time. The DVD extras are modest for a Criterion release, just the trailer, a brief introduction from screenwriter Jean-Claude Carrière and an accompanying booklet, but *The Phantom of Liberty* needs little elaboration. FRED BELDIN

VIBRATIONS/FLUCTUATIONS/SUBMISSION

Joe Sarno/Leo J. Rhewdnl/Allen Savage (SOMETHING WEIRD)

This triple-feature of monochrome skin-fests proves that the late '60s weren't all about flowers and freedom. Each title boasts its own kinky charms but *Submission* is the one to beat, perfect for adventurous late-night viewing. Jennifer Welles plays the troubled heroine, trapped in a child-like dream state by her villainous boyfriend, with murder and lesbianism as her only outlets. The film presents a feverish, mesmerizing hour of suggestive chocolate bars and lewdly applied candle wax enhanced by a hypnotic score of dissonant drones and sinister crescendos. Director Allen Savage takes his film in a lot of grim directions, but manages to keep the darkest sequences safe in the fantasy zone for maximum viewer satisfaction. Warning: contains nudity. FRED BELDIN

EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN: HALBER MENSCH

Sogo Ishii (CHERRY RED FILMS)

Back in the pre-grunge era, we in "the scene" (Flint Michigan Suburb Division) eschewed industrial music as not punk, beneath contempt, disco or worse. Einstürzende Neubauten alone passed muster, because at heart they're a rock & roll band, with bones and blood behind each beat. This title catches the band in its prime, strumming shopping carts and hammering metal in junkyards and on stage, emaciated German beatniks leaping from one pile of debris to the next in ecstatic states. It's the sound of men trapped in machines, and if you hear music in those clanking tones, seeing it performed is pretty exciting. Then all the Japanese S/M mime starts happening, you realize they're partially responsible for Marilyn Manson videos, and everything is ruined. FRED BELDIN

MAESTRO

Josell Ramos (ARTILLION PRODUCTIONS)

Filmmaker Josell Ramos clearly meant *Maestro* as a love letter to the NYC underground dance movement of the '70s and '80s, but much like a love letter, the film challenges the attention of any party not directly involved. Ramos splices talking-head commentary from former club habitués with raw footage of sweaty nights at the Loft, the Gallery, and the Paradise Garage—three invitation-only dance clubs created due to NYC's anti-gay dancing restrictions. Interviews with presumably legendary DJs are shot using guerrilla-style cinematography to match the grainy club footage, making it hard to watch. *Maestro* could be a match for those already attracted to the subject of the early underground DJ scene, but for others a second date isn't likely. ANDREA HEIMER

FAUST: IMPRESSIONS

Zappi-W-Diermaier (MUSIC VIDEO DISTRIBUTORS)

Faust begins promisingly enough, with a man in a polar bear costume accosted by German hippies who whisk him away to their secret lair, ply him with cakes, and proceed to chit-chat about God knows what because they were all too high to notice that the sound wasn't rolling. Unfortunately, that's just the home-movie intro, and it never gets that good again. Like an exhibit at a video installation, it's worth a cursory investigation, but nobody necessarily wants to be stuck watching it in the traditional movie sense. In fact, if Zappi-W-Diermaier's dull-as-dirt navelgazings were in a gallery, audiences would bust a shin sprinting away from it. And at least a video installation would have cheese and wine. ANDY SMETANKA

SONIC OUTLAWS

Craig Baldwin (OTHER CINEMA DIGITAL)

In a culture caked with media (indie, mainstream or otherwise), sometimes taking things out of context is the only way to understand what the barrage is really doing to us. *Sonic Outlaws* examines the theories and techniques of media collage artists who redirect the flood of electronic images and sounds for new, twisted takes on the meaning of composition and authorship. Culture jammers like Negativland, the Tape Beatles and the Barbie Liberation Army are profiled, but director Craig Baldwin makes *Sonic Outlaws* into a work of media collage art in its own right, devouring undigested bits of video flotsam for ironic counterpoint and chilling verisimilitude. Baldwin's heroes fight antiquated copyright laws by reclaiming media from The Man, one tape splice at a time. FRED BELDIN