



'The Orphanage'

DAY OF THE DEAD 2007 LEEDS CITY VARIETIES

Day Of The Dead is the new kid on the block of British horror festivals, showcasing a more cultish side of the genre than field leader Frightfest. While Frightfest offers a preview of what to expect on the smaller screens of your local multiplex in months to come, the Leeds Dead fest offers flicks you're unlikely to see on the big screen anywhere else. Similarly, while Frightfest screens at London's garishly glitzy West End Odeon, the last Day Of The Dead was hosted in the atmospheric environs of the Leeds City Varieties, boasting the fading crimson grandeur of an authentic Victorian music hall.

First up is 'WAZ', a UK/US co-production. Occupying similar territory between the horror and thriller genres as 'Se7en', it features a jaded New York detective (Stellan Skarsgård) and his cute young partner (Melissa George), on the trail of a killer who's brutally torturing some of the Big Apple's more unsavoury denizens. Thoughtful and dark, with some nasty twists and turns, if you like your police procedurals grim, you'll love 'WAZ' [8].

'Espectro' hails from Colombia, with ghostly overtones of the likes of 'The Ring', though very much in the paranoid style of Roman Polanski. Noëlle Schonwald is a young woman who isolates herself in an apartment after a traumatic incident, only to find her sanity dissolving within its claustrophobic walls. Truly creepy and clever, if somewhat slow-moving [7].

Sad to say, while by no means worthless, British effort 'The Devil's Chair' is the dud of the day. Andrew Howard plays a mental patient, accused of killing his girlfriend in an abandoned asylum, though he claims she actually fell victim to the Satanic furniture of the title. The film's cartoonish style helps keep the pace going and papers over the weaker performances – it also boasts the



'Exte - Hair Extensions'

requisite gore and giggles – but the film is nowhere near as cutting-edge or smart as it wants to be [4.5].

By comparison 'Exte - Hair Extensions' is a cult masterpiece, an example of the exuberantly demented film-making at which the Japanese excel. A tale of vengeance-beyond-the-grave via haunted hairpieces, 'Exte - Hair Extensions' is by turns hilarious, touching, and gross. Wholeheartedly recommended [9].

'The Orphanage', from Spain, was the evening's finale. The involvement of Guillermo Del Toro has invited comparisons with 'Pan's Labyrinth', and they're not unwarranted, though this is more of a traditional ghost story. Belen Rueda returns to the abandoned institution of the title, once her childhood home, in order to renovate it. But when her adopted son disappears mysteriously, spectres of the past loom ever larger. A quietly sinister movie that's authentically eerie, if a little saccharine in places [8].

Taken as a whole, the Leeds Day Of The Dead – along with its nocturnal sister Night Of The Dead – does a sterling job of bringing together a truly diverse selection of horror flicks, at a pocket-friendly price in a very cool venue, and deserves a place in the diaries of all dedicated fans of cult and underground horror cinema.

GAVIN BADDELEY

BOOKS 'BLOOD AND DISHONOUR'

Edited by Nigel Wingrove
The internet has launched a veritable legion of 'alternative

models' – a growing acreage of online pierced and tattooed female flesh – most successfully, via SuicideGirls.com. For some strange reason, while traditional glamour modelling was tawdry and exploitative, if you bare all wielding a whip or sporting a Bettie Page fringe it's an expression of feminine empowerment. Among the latest, and fiercest, entrants into this arena are the Satanic Sluts, and 'Blood And Dishonour' is their photographic manifesto.

They are 'the true elite of all of the alternative scenes' female collectives,' announces commander-in-chief Nigel Wingrove in the book's introduction, which sets out his stall for the Sluts as the harlot heralds of 'Feminism Year Zero!' Mr Wingrove declares that "Their collective displays of blood and flesh, of victim and victor, have pushed and challenged convention... Their ideas of presentation, art, politics and creativity going forward offer new paths to conquer and new beliefs to follow." It's the kind of fruity polemic at which he excels, brilliant Barnum and Bailey blarney, which dazzles more than illuminates.

'Blood And Dishonour' features interviews with all of the 36 featured Sluts – addressing such issues as immigration and the death penalty – though if you're hoping for philosophical enlightenment you may be disappointed. Along the way we learn that Satannichen likes spending 'quality time with my rabbits', and that Gothness reckons that war is 'stooopid'. It's a lot like a bizarre alternative version of the rounds in beauty pageants where contestants

express their love of orphans and yearning for world peace.

Such cynicism aside, 'Blood And Honour' is a highly impressive, visually powerful volume. The fact that the girls picked the pictures themselves helps contribute to a look that is far more interesting than the flood of coffee table erotica on the market. While there's nudity aplenty, many of the images are arresting in a far broader sense. It would have been intriguing to address questions such as why the lines between bloodshed and beauty have become so blurred for so many; however 'Blood And Dishonour' offers no verdict on such issues, presenting only the compelling evidence.

[8.5] GAVIN BADDELEY

GRAPHIC NOVELS 'TANK GIRL: THE GIFTING'

TITAN
Fuck thrash, when will the riot grrrrl resurgence begin? Inundated with candy-coated goth girls crooning their way through Terrorizer's sphere, it's high time that the chicks got some balls and if anyone's going to lead the pack it's Tank Girl. As the bastion of feminism in the mid-'90s her violent misadventures gave girls a reason to want to accompany their boyfriends to the local comic emporium. However in 1995 after selling their souls to Hollywood, and subsequently Damon Albarn (via his 'Gorillaz' audio/visual moneyspinner), Tank Girl was locked up... until now. Creator Alan C Martin has dusted off the decaying corpse of the gun-toting antihero and it seems that over the decade she's had time to reconsider some of the follies of her youth. She now has sophisticated lunches, hosts charity events for needy children and invests in property. However along the way she decapitates a member of her favourite boyband, kills a henchman with a manicure set and generally makes her long-suffering sidekick Booga's life hell. A welcome return for this peerless female role model.

[8] LOUISE BROWN

COMEDY DVD 'LUCAS & WALLIAMS: THE EARLY DAYS'

LIBERATION ENTERTAINMENT
First broadcast in 2005 on the Paramount Comedy Channel, this documentary is made up of old interviews with the top comedy duo. Presented and directed by ex-'Shooting Stars' writer and general gameshow impresario Iain Coyle, it is not surprising that Walliams features little, and most material comes from Lucas on location filming 'Shooting Stars'. This provides a nice reminder of Lucas' previous status as George Dawes with the Scores, as well as the irreverent and

bizarre world of 'Shooting Stars'; seeing him in character as both Jimmy Saville and as a rather convincing Uncle Fester is only upstaged by him getting interviewed whilst dressed as Mr T.

Despite promising a deep delve within the decade-plus history behind the working partnership of Matt Lucas and David Walliams, this DVD is hugely disappointing, not least as the razor-sharp pop satire 'Rock Profiles' is omitted. At only twenty minutes long, the documentary is more for the collection of the diehard fan as opposed to someone who just likes watching 'Little Britain'. The character of Sir Bernard Chumley, the character Lucas invented upon beginning his stand-up career in the early 1990s, and 'Little Britain' regular, features heavily, and Walliams' portrayal of his floor manager (whom he met in prison) is creepily entertaining. Their chemistry is something rare in today's climate of canned laughter and imported sitcoms, and despite its fairly one-dimensional investigation of the past of the comedy pair, it definitely provides an entertaining window.

[6] EMMA GRITT

MUSIC DVD GENITORTURERS

'LIVE IN SIN'
MVD VISUAL
Unlike most live performances released on DVD, which can come across as stagnant and inaccessible, Genitorturers' 'Live In Sin' is the total opposite. This could be due to the band's notorious live shows which verge on pornographic, or it could be due to the impressive production values that give this entire DVD a sheen that is almost as slick as the latex ensembles lead singer Gen has poured herself in to for the performance.

Interspersed with backstage clips of the band and performers preparing for the show, as well as plenty of crowd shots and interaction, the energy of the band is captured perfectly on celluloid. The performance artists that appear on stage and are such a vital part of the Genitorturers experience add a real sense of excitement to the DVD; and even if the music is not quite what you would usually listen to, there is no reason why you wouldn't enjoy watching people getting pierced, kicked in the testicles and whipped while strutting their stuff in a vast range of fetish wear.

With plenty of extra features including mud wrestling, interviews and the hard to find Japanese video for song 'Sin City', this DVD has everything a fan could want, and possibly everything required to convert a newcomer to this industrial-goth institution.

[7] EMMA GRITT