"The Cinema Breakdown with Mark Burger ": Stories : goTriad.com

with the word "Phantom" in the title. 1940's slow-moving Phantom of Chinatown (*1/2) is the sixth and last of Monogram's Mr. Wong series, with Keye Luke playing a younger version of the sleuth previously played by Boris Karloff. The 1942 whodunit Phantom Killer (**) was directed by the aptly nicknamed William "One Shot" Beaudine. The best of the trio is Albert Herman's fast-moving 1945 thriller The Phantom of 42nd Street (**1/2), in which Dave O'Brien plays a critic-turned-sleuth on the trail of a killer in New York's theater world. Cyril Delevanti and Alan Mowbray, mainstays of many a B-movie, are so again here. Given the age of these films, the DVD transfers aren't always so hot ... but that's a part of the B-movie charm.

SECRETS OF A CALL GIRL (NoShame Films): Cult favorite Edwige Fenech plays a woman trying to live down her dangerous past as a prostitute in this cautionary fable from 1973. International appeal provided by Hollywood veteran Richard Conte, fresh from The Godfather, playing - surprise, surprise - a Mafia don. **

THE SEDUCTION (Anchor Bay Home Entertainment): This tawdry 1982 sex thriller sees loony photographer Andrew Stevens stalking glamorous TV newswoman Morgan Fairchild. A long-time favorite on late-night cable - thanks mostly to mouth-watering Morgan. Rated R *1/2

UKM: THE ULTIMATE KILLING MACHINE (Genius Products, Inc.): Michael Madsen toplines this lowbudget action shocker about a group of misfits subjected to diabolical experiments by the military. A few goofy touches, but ultimately this is a D.U.D. *

WEREWOLVES ON WHEELS (Dark Sky Films): Bikers get mixed up with black magic in this mind-boggling 1971 drive-in favorite. Why doesn't someone remake this? Just for the record, the title never appears onscreen. Rated R. *¹/₂

WHITE RUSH (Monarch Home Video): Mark L. Lester's fast-paced film noir is nothing you haven't seen before, but C.Courtney Joyner's fast-moving screenplay keeps it quite watchable. The performances are also a cut above, including those of Louis Mandylor, Judd Nelson (also the film's associate producer), Charlie Schlatter, Sandra Vidal and luscious Deborah Zoe. Rated R. **1/2

THE EERIE MIDNIGHT HORROR SHOW (Eclectic DVD/Music Video Distributors): Stella Carnacina plays a young art student possessed by a lascivious demon in this enjoyably silly 1974 Exorcist knock-off, released to some territories as The Sexorcist. In typical Exorcist fashion, our endangered heroine pukes - green, of course - the demon out at the end. Fans of schlock horror have a big head start. Purportedly based on a true story (!). Rated R. **

INVINCIBLE (Buena Vista Home Entertainment): Mark Wahlberg gives one of his best performances as real-life "regular guy" Vince Papale, who attended open tryouts with the Philadelphia Eagles in the 1970s and wound up playing pro football for them. The best and most inspirational movie ever made about the Philadelphia Eagles ... unless you count the off-handed (but hilarious) reference in The World According to Garp. Given the subject matter and the (deserved) reputation of Philadelphia sports fans, it's truly remarkable that this film contains no profanity whatsoever. Greg Kinnear is also first-rate as coach Dick Vermeil. Rated PG. ***

THE LEOPARD (The Criterion Collection): A spectacular, fully restored version of Luchino Visconti's sumptuous 1963 epic (a.k.a. Il Gattopardo), based on the novel by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa. As the aging Italian count watching an era fade, Burt Lancaster is magnificent. Claudia Cardinale and Alain Delon co-star as infatuated young lovers. Winner of the Golden Palm award at the Cannes Film Festival, with Piero Tosi's costume design receiving the film's (inexplicable) single Oscar nomination. Nino Rota contributes a breathtaking score. The Criterion edition includes the dubbed, 161-minute American release. If you've never seen this film, you are in for a major treat. ****

MAN-THING (Lions Gate Home Entertainment): The monstrous Marvel Comics superhero comes to life in this ecological-minded shocker that is top-heavy with CGI effects. Still, we've all seen worse ... Rated R. **

NATE & HAYES (Paramount Home Video): Slow-moving 1983 attempt to resurrect the swashbuckler genre stars Tommy Lee Jones as Capt. "Bully" Hayes. Comes alive in the third act, but too late. John Hughes was one of the screenwriters. Rated PG. **

O.C. & STIGGS (MGM Home Entertainment/Sony Pictures Home Entertainment): Director Robert Altman's

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