

# DVD REVIEWS

## Satan's Little Helper DVD (2005, Jeff Lieberman, DVD Box Office R2)

Another low budget/high quality gem from the director of SQUIRM, JUST BEFORE DAWN and BLUE SUNSHINE. This one has a killer premise: a nine year old horror fan, obsessed with the video game Satan's Little Helper, goes out on Halloween dressed as the titular character. Spying someone disguised as a particularly scary devil, he offers to act as 'Satan's' assistant for the evening. What he doesn't know is that Satan is really an escaped psychopath intent on murdering as many townsfolk as possible before the night is over! Pretty soon, Satan has his eyes set on the boy's own family... Lieberman has always had an ear for dialogue as well as an eye for striking imagery and he combines both here to great effect. The Halloween setting allows him to stage some atmospheric set-pieces, such as the one where a bunch of trick-or-treaters admire Satan's garden display of slaughtered bodies and photograph him posing with the corpses, not realising that they are the genuine article. He also has a lot of fun with Satan's gleeful deception of the child as the kid becomes an accomplice to ever-increasing acts of murder, mutilation and mayhem. But my favourite scene has to be the one where the boy's father refuses to believe his son's wild claims about assisting Satan. When the kid urges Satan to appear and prove his sincerity by ripping out his father's innards, it's a pretty convincing argument! Not as deliberately dumb-ass as MONSTER MAN, this is another minor gem that deserves a far bigger audience. It's definitely the best slasher film I've seen in many a moon, and probably one of the best horror films in quite a while. So go check it out. LIAM RONAN.

## • Solitude Aeternus - Hour of Despair DVD (Metal Mind)

A blue print of 80's doom, was at the time, best visualised by, probably, Candlemass and Solitude Aeternus. Heavy riffs, gloomy vibe and a "vocal" as frontman. Songs about death, despair, impending doom and us praying to some higher power to try and stop it all. And maybe we can't stop armageddon, but we managed to postpone the end of over 25 years now, which is pretty good come to think of it. In February 2007, Solitude Aeternus set foot on a stage in Warsaw to spread their gospel. Intense and haunting as you might have expected it. An hour of despair, which strangely enough lasts over TWO hours, is bringing us a 12-song cross section of the bands long lasting career. It's even possible to compare these 2007 recordings to footage from 1992 and 1987 as we also get some bootleg bonus stuff from back in the day as a bonus. With the 5.1 sound the desperation of the Warsaw gig is dripping from your TV set. Another great live DVD by the Polish Metal Mind Productions, giving another metal legend a chance to become immortal. Martijn Welzen

## • SS Experiment DVD (1976 Sergio Garrone, Substance R0)

Oh dear, taste-free nasty nazi mayhem from those wacky Italians. This dire film has an undeserved reputation, especially in the UK where its full page trade ads (as SS Experiment Camp) helped kickstart the video nasty social phenomenon. In a concentration camp at an undisclosed location, SS doctors conduct bizarre experiments which basically require a group of female prisoners to shag soldiers selected as being 'perfect physical examples' of the Aryan ideal. One of the inmates starts a love affair (!) with a sentry, but the commandant has other plans for the poor sod. He blackmails the camp doctor into transplanting the soldier's testicles as a replacement for his own missing balls. If the doctor doesn't comply, the commandant will reveal the truth: that the doctor is actually (gasp) Jewish! Although seeing as the doctor spends his evenings dressed as a Rabbi, how he managed to join the staff of a concentration camp is anyone's guess. After the operation, the two lovers discover the commandant's scheme when a romantic liaison turns into a comedy routine. The distraught soldier recruits the female prisoners into helping him confront the commandant, leading to the immortal line "How have you been doing with my balls?" Believe me when I say this film is simply awful. While it is not quite in the giant polystyrene swastika league of SS HELL CAMP/THE BEAST IN HEAT, its ineptness is staggering to behold. If Garrone had been at all successful in making this the slightest bit realistic, it could have been an unbearable endurance test. But he didn't, and it ain't. Seeing as the director also had a hand in the script, I think it's fair to say that he really dropped the, erm, ball with this one (sorry!). LIAM RONAN.

## St John's Wort DVD (2001, Tem Shimoyama, Universe R3)

Video designer Nami draws on her disturbing dreams of childhood to create bestselling games. When she inherits an abandoned mansion once owned by a famous painter, she discovers it matches the house of her nightmares. Trapped inside its rotting walls after a falling tree crushes her car, Nami reluctantly settles down for the night, only to discover that the house is full of hidden CCTV cameras - and that she is not alone... An atmospheric shocker starring Megumi Okina of JU-ON: THE GRUDGE. ST JOHN'S WORT offers plenty of chills without resorting to the long-haired demon girls made popular by the likes of RINGU. It's a deliberately modern horror film, shot on digital camera to give it a crisp, video game quality and with some scenes tweaked in post-production to create red skies and solarised gardens full of impossibly blue flowers. The editing is highly stylised and some scenes move suddenly into fast-forward, pause and rewind mode. Technology is also very much in evidence in the plot. Nami keeps in touch with her game designer friends while trapped in the mansion by way of mobile phone and a wireless internet connection, and they provide her with a map of the house by analysing the images she emails them. This helps her discover the secret that lies at the heart of the house, one that relies heavily on Pupi Avati's THE HOUSE WITH THE LAUGHING WINDOWS: Nami's father was a painter who specialised in capturing faces of suffering and pain.

and judging from a cellar filled with the mummified corpses of children, he liked to work from life. As befits a film that is styled like a video game, the climax offers three alternative endings. The title derives from the plant growing in the mansion's gardens which supposedly represents violent revenge. Worth a watch. LIAM RONAN.

## Stan Lee Presents: Mosaic DVD (2007, Anchor Bay UK R2)

Stan Lee must be one of the most prolific people alive today. Barely a month goes by where I don't read his name connected to some project or other. MOSAIC is one such movie, here released by those ever diverse good people at Anchor Bay UK, and is a pretty good adventure yarn that plays like a slightly more adult version of the great 1990s X MEN and SPIDERMAN cartoons - the animation even recalls the pre-computer art of yore. The story is about a villain trying to steal a museum relic, only for it to end up in the hands of a young girl upon whom it bestows superpowers - in this case, chameleon abilities and super strength. The villain then sets out to retrieve the relic at all costs... Taking in a hidden alien race, an international conspiracy and some bone-breaking violence along the way, MOSAIC is decent enough fare, but also feels like it is setting up a series. Anna Paquin lends her vocal skills to the project and there are some nice in-jokes along the way ("Mom! That looks like Spider-Man!"). LIAM RONAN.

## Stan Lee Presents: The Condor DVD (2007, Anchor Bay UK R2)

The second of this issue's Stan Lee presentations is about a college dropout who turns his back on the family robotics business to become a champion skateboarder. When his family are killed in a brutal attack that leaves him without the use of his legs, he uses experimental nanobot technology to rebuild his body and becomes the Condor, a tortured superhero who must balance his thirst for revenge against a quest for justice. Up against him are adrenalised crazies created by a rival corporation and a super-villain who wants him dead... Again featuring some pretty heavy violence matched with an old-school approach to animation, THE CONDOR is an entertaining morality tale wrapped up in Lee's usual superhero antics. If the Condor ever returns, I'll definitely be seeking his next adventure out. LIAM RONAN.

## The Call Of Cthulhu DVD (HPLHS Pictures)

([www.cthulhulives.org](http://www.cthulhulives.org))

How long have I been waiting for this? How long have I been waiting for someone to film Lovecraft's (arguably) definitive mythos story? In fact, how long have I been waiting for someone to film a faithful Lovecraft adaptation? Twenty two years, ever since I first discovered the works of Lovecraft, who went on to become, and remains to this day, one of my favourite writers, and at long last, twenty two long years later, my prayers have been answered, at long last a faithful cinematic interpretation of Lovecraft exists. There have been other attempts (some of the good in their own right, good but not faithful) to transpose the words of Lovecraft from paper to film, 'The Reanimator', 'Dagon' and 'From Beyond' spring to mind, but where they sought to update Lovecraft, 'The Call Of Cthulhu' does the exact opposite, remaining true to the spirit and the text of the tale upon which it is based. You see, 'The Call Of Cthulhu' is a silent, black and white film (yeah, you read that right, no sound, no colour), filmed as though it was shot in 1928, the year in which Lovecraft wrote his infamous story, and it is perfect in every sense, the story, the delivery, the pacing, the atmosphere, it's all just perfect. Everything that the other movies based on his work lack, "... Cthulhu" has, although if you're not familiar with or a fan of Lovecraft's work, it's debatable how much you'll enjoy or get out of this, but if like me, you adore and cherish every word the man wrote, then you HAVE to see this film, open your heart and embrace the Old Ones and wait for sunken Ryleh to rise. Cthulhu lives... Tim Mass Movement

## The Dungeons & Dragons Experience: A Documentary By Jesse Spiro DVD (SpiroGraphics)

([www.dungeonsanddragonsexperience.com](http://www.dungeonsanddragonsexperience.com))

Deep breath, and I'm ready... I admit, I'm a gamer, and I play D&D amongst other RPG's and have done, on and off, since I was eleven years old. Its perfect escapist culture and a culture that relies on using your own imagination rather than being force fed someone else's version of it via computer games with pre-determined and pre-programmed outcomes. D&D always relied (and still does) on the players creating their own interpretation of the world in which the rules are set, using their imagination to create something special, something entertaining and something fun, and damn, I've had over twenty years of fun with FRP's... However, try telling anyone that you play 'D&D' and they'll jump to one conclusion, that you're a 'Geek' (or 'Nerd' if you prefer to use the other term, not really a lot to choose between them) - like playing a game is any more geeky than collecting every vinyl variation of a single record, and try explaining otherwise, or explaining D&D itself and people seem to shy away, or you have one hell of a time trying to get to grips with things. Well, no more. With 'The Dungeons & Dragons Experience', Jesse Spiro has approached the subject with some simple questions "What is D&D?", "What does it mean to you?", "What makes it so special?", "What's its appeal?", but more importantly, he's asked the right people. He's asked gamers and industry people alike, and for once he's actually managed to get the right answers. He's managed to get answers that make sense, answers that open the D&D world up to those involved and those who are completely new to RPG's. Man, this is compulsive viewing whether you've ever played the game, or whether you just laughed at the people who did. Maybe you won't laugh anymore, and maybe, just maybe you'll want to start hanging around with those people you did laugh at... Tim Mass Movement

## • The Jesus Lizard -- The Jesus Lizard DVD (MVD Visual)

The Jesus Lizard, a band that gets name-checked often by pretty much everyone with even an ounce of musical credibility, but one that never achieved much commercial success. It's a damn shame, too, since so many acts have ripped these guys off so blatantly and gone onto to get a nice slice of the pie.

You can't fuck with true originals, though, and David Yow and company were certainly that. This is a pro-shot DVD containing a full concert that took place on 4 October 1994 at the Venus de Milo Club in Boston, USA. Yow is all over the stage—and often the crowd, who happily hold him aloft and pass him around as he continues to sing, scream, and howl without ever missing a beat—and the band is tight as hell, gaining momentum with each song and never letting up. The performance is great, and the sound is well above average, though the camera-work often seems stale and uninspired to me. I guess there wasn't a lot they could do, as it appears to be shot with a couple of stationary cameras and maybe one or two more handhelds, in a small venue packed with people. The bonus section on this DVD is where the true value lies: 5 songs filmed by Merle Allin (GG's brother) at New York's legendary (and now gone) CBGB's in 1992. The Jesus Lizard convey everything that anyone could ever need to know about them in these five all-too-short tracks, delivering a frenetic performance that proves they were one of the best live bands of the 90s. [The Impaler]

## The Warriors: Ultimate Director's Cut DVD (1979, Walter Hill, Paramount R2)

"Waaaaarrriiiorsss... come out to pla-ayyyy!" Here it is, the quintessential gang warfare movie, a flick that was discussed endlessly in the school playground of my youth - specifically, was it better than THE WANDERERS? (Answer: yes!), Sure, some of the stylised gear worn by the gangs in this 1979 fan favourite may look a bit silly now, but the titular Warriors are still the coolest of the cool. A psychotic youth guns down the leader of the baddest gang in New York and frames the poor old Warriors for the dirty deed. As the night draws in, the Warriors have to fight their way back to their Coney Island home turf against every other gang in the city, block by bloody block. They're not interested in proving their innocence, if anyone wants to rumble with them, they'll happily oblige. And they do. Walter Hill's flair for action and drama were at their peak when he directed this cracking fight flick, and he drew criticism for encouraging real-life violence after genuine gangbangers started scrapping in the aisles during screenings. His vision of NYC offers a grim backdrop of deserted train stations, endless night and neon washed streets as the Warriors take on the likes of the Baseball Furies, the Orphans, the Rogues, the Lizzies and the Turnbull A.C.s. My favourite scene is the quiet moment on a subway train where a group of rich prom kids sit opposite the poverty-stricken Warriors. The tension as the two opposing social groups silently eye each other is brilliantly observed. Michael Beck cuts a mean, chisel-jawed swagger as anti-hero Swan, but it is David Patrick Kelly's turn as Luther, the unstable leader of the Rogues, who steals the show. This director's cut doesn't really offer up much in the way of new material, but then the flick was never in need of anything more. The greatest gang warfare film ever made, bar none. LIAM RONAN

## Trader Hornee DVD (1970 Don Tsanudi, Something Weird R0)

In a time when BIG BROTHER presents male and female nudity on prime time national television and the likes of AMERICAN PIE can make gags for the mainstream about masturbation with musical instruments, this infamous 1970 sex comedy from exploitation supremo David F. Friedman has lost much of its bite. But it's still a sleazy curio with a strangely endearing charm all of its own. Down-at-heels private investigator Hamilton Hornee ("The ee's are silent") and his voluptuous assistant ("Come blow your horn!") are hired by the local bank to locate Algona, a girl who went missing in the African jungle twenty years ago and who has since become heiress to a vast fortune. Joining them for the trip are a bunch of pervers and drunkards who either spend their time bitching or shagging. Hmmm, it's more like BIG BROTHER than I thought... Imagine a CARRY ON film with more explicit swearing, dirtier jokes, lots of blotchy female flesh and the likes of Sid James going stark bollock naked and you won't be far off. Any film where even the stock footage animals get throwaway puns isn't going to win awards for sophistication, but TRADER HORNEE never pretends to be anything other than good silly fun - and it is. Did I mention the Nazi war criminal disguised as an albino gorilla? Director Tsanudi went on to work on some major Hollywood blockbusters including HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE, but deep down, you just know he's most proud of TRADER HORNEE. LIAM RONAN.

## V/A - Promo Sampler from Bad Boys For Life Vol. 3 DVD (People Like You)

All I got was a single-disc sampler—the finished product will be a double-DVD set with lots more material—but I enjoyed the hell out of this DVD. Bad Boys For Life Vol. 3 is worth having for the promo videos from The Black Halos ("3 Sheets To The Wind") and Charley Horse ("Bad Ass Dad") alone; two original, inventive clips that have made me realize there are still people out there who put time, thought, and effort into making videos, despite the fact that there are no television outlets that will actually play them. Total Chaos, US Bombs, Born To Lose, Roger Miret & The Disasters, and Deadline also have very cool videos on here, and there are live clips of Demented Are Go, The Bones, Heartbreak Engines, and Ski King. This promo copy also features abbreviated snippets of interviews with many of these acts, so the full version will likely feature some pretty lengthy and entertaining interviews—though it appears that some of them are conducted in languages other than English, so beware if you are not multilingual. Some people love seeing videos and live clips of bands they dig on their televisions (or computers), and some people can't be bothered. I am in the former group, and I enjoyed this collection immensely. Note to every label everywhere: put out more videos from cool bands on DVD! [The Impaler]