

DVD REVIEWS

Altered DVD (2006, Eduardo Sanchez, Universal R2)

One of the rules about writing a screenplay is that what remains unseen or unheard is just as important as what you leave in. Jamie Nash's ALTERED script is a superb example of this.

A story about what happens to a group of redneck friends after they have been abducted by aliens, it dispenses with their traumatic close encounter and drops us straight into the isolated rural action as the group hunts down and captures one of the aliens responsible.

With the creature chained to a table in a remote farmhouse, the friends argue about what their next move should be - use the alien to prove that they were telling the truth about what happened to them, or torture it to death in revenge for their ordeal. But the alien's comrades are not about to give up their brother without a fight.

Forget about any comparisons with the X FILES, because this is smarter, scarier and gorier fare. Intestines are yanked out by the yard, cavities are probed for implanted devices, throats are torn out, people are nailed to walls and one poor sod rots on the bone thanks to an infectious alien bite. Even better, the film is dripping with atmosphere and cleverly does not answer all of the questions it poses - why is one of the friends so attuned to the aliens' activities? Why are the aliens scared of him? And what exactly happened to the group when they were abducted?

Director Eduardo Sanchez need never work again thanks to the success of THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT, so perhaps he could afford a certain luxury in his approach to making this, his second feature. Reuniting most of the crew and at least one of the cast from his debut, he proves that his original success was not a fluke - ALTERED is creepy as hell and demands to be seen. I can't wait to see Sanchez and Nash' next collaboration, SEVENTH MOON. LIAM RONAN.

American Hardcore: The History Of American Punk 1980 - 1986. Directed by Paul Rachman. Written by Steven Blush DVD (www.americanhardcorethemovie.com)

And so, it reaches DVD, the long anticipated film set to follow up and accompany Steven Blush's book of the same name, and I guess the all important question is 'So is it any good?' Actually... it is. It's pretty damn good, asking eth right people the right questions in order to get highly animated responses that help to deliver a definite sense of history and firm picture of what happened through the experiences of those involved. If there's one issue I have with the film, it's this. Henry Rollins, Ian MacKaye, Keith Morris, Vic Bondi, HR, Harley Flanagan, all the people that you'd expect to be in the film are, and that's it. Where are the people that you wouldn't expect to see? The guys who were there and still are, doing their own, less popular take on things - Cliff Hanger from the Freeze, Blaine, Dana and Alex from The Accused, Dinah Cancer, Danzig (talking about The Misfits), Casey Royer, Al Flipside, Al Quint, the guys and girls who also played a HUGE part in the early eighties scene? Ah, it's just a minor quibble though, as you can't have everything can ya, and what we do get is pretty damn special. Face it folks, if you love HC and punk (and you wouldn't be reading MM is ya didn't would ya?), this film is damn essential. It's as simple as that, the history lesson that won't bore you and might even put a smile on your face... Tim Mass Movement

Anthropophagus DVD (1981, Joe D'Amato, Shriekshow R1)

Back in the mid-1990s, a News at Ten presenter warned viewers that they were about to see a clip from a genuine snuff movie that had been seized by UK police. I watched in amazement as a lumbering, scarred man yanked an unborn baby out from beneath the skirt of a pregnant woman and sank his teeth into its flesh. Why was I amazed? I recognised the killer! But I didn't call the police, because the culprit was Italian actor Luigi Montefiori, the 'baby' was a skinned rabbit, and the 'genuine snuff film' was really Joe D'Amato's banned gore epic, ANTHROPOPHAGUS.

The naivety of the British media aside, no one would dispute the outrageous nature of this scene - ANTHROPOPHAGUS is one of those films that genuinely earned its video nasty status. Set on a Greek island, the film opens with a German holidaymaker spotting a small boat washed up near the shore. Swimming over to it, she is plucked beneath the waves amid billowing clouds of blood. Her sunbathing friend is next as a huge meat cleaver slams into his forehead, cutting his walkman headphones in two - the Anthropophagus Beast has arrived!

Sadly, after this slam bang opening the film becomes one long travelogue sequence as a group of tourists make their way to the island. When they finally get there, the thrills pick up again as they discover a deserted village littered with corpses of people who have been cannibalised. They unravel the tale of a man who went mad while adrift at sea after hunger forced him to nibble on the bodies of his dead family. Now returned to his island home, the leprous cannibal sets about picking the visitors off one by one in increasingly gory ways. As the tagline says, it's not fear that tears you apart... it's him!

This two-disc special edition features an uncut print with promo trailers, the Americanised 'GRIM REAPER' credit sequence, a Joe D'Amato documentary, interviews with the cast and crew and much more. It's not big and it certainly isn't clever, but ANTHROPOPHAGUS is one of those films that horror fans owe it to themselves to watch at least once. They really don't make them like this anymore! LIAM RONAN.

Grindhouse Trailer Classics DVD (2007, Nucleus Films R0)

In the tradition of MAD RON'S PREVIEWS FROM HELL and the more recent 42ND STREET FOREVER (reviewed last issue), GRINDHOUSE TRAILER CLASSICS offers a thick slice of similarly exploitative thrills and is another great release from the boys at Nucleus Films. Designed to tie in with the release of the Quentin

Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez GRINDHOUSE flicks, what we have here is a collection of 56 trailers for movies that are united in that they share the distinct odour of 42nd Street in its grimy prime - all greasy sidewalk, rotting garbage and dazzling neon. Given that the grindhouse tag and viewing experience is a particularly American phenomenon - the UK's nearest equivalent would be the much-missed double bills of the 70s - Nucleus Films have also produced a handy introduction to this seedy world. Called Bump 'n' Grind, it is presented by Emily Booth and is included here as an extra alongside some great poster art galleries. Expertly researched and written by NIGHTMARE USA author Stephen Thrower, this is a useful guide for anyone who is a newcomer to the cinematic underbelly. As for the trailers themselves, you can settle back to enjoy the dubious charms of ILSA, SHE WOLF OF THE SS, ride shotgun across country with David Carradine in CANNONBALL, break bones alongside Sonny Chiba in the awesome THE STREETFIGHTER, wonder what could possibly be so awful that they couldn't include it in THE LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT, laugh out loud at THE THING WITH TWO HEADS, get down with Rudy Ray Moore in THE DISCO GODFATHER, roll your eyes at the ludicrous DR BLACK AND MR HYDE and marvel at how well Mark Lindsay/Paul Revere (of 'and the Raiders' fame) managed to score the insanely entertaining SHOGUN ASSASSIN with nothing more than a synthesiser. And if that's not enough, you even get a cover specially commissioned by Graham Humphreys, the guy responsible for THE EVIL DEAD's legendary UK poster campaign. Grab a copy today, and remind yourself how much fun going to the movies used to be! LIAM RONAN.

Hellboy Animated: Blood & Iron DVD (Starz Media)

Hellboy. Full length animated feature. Story by Mike Mignola. The cats of the movie all onboard and involved. Four phrases that made me jump for joy (well, sort of bounce around a bit, I'm old and I have bad knee's...), and thank whatever messed up deities control the fates for actually doing something right and just for once. But then, after my ten second burst of euphoric gratitude, it occurred to me 'What if it isn't as good as you hope it's going to be? What if it doesn't live up your (admittedly) sky high expectations?' I began to worry, began to think that maybe I'd go loco and end up in the middle of some supermarket hacking away at strangers with a blunt, rusty knife, my insanity fuelled by immense disappointment. What if is no way to live when you need to discover the truth, and so with a sense of trepidation and intense hope, I pressed play and settled down. No-one is going to end up dying at the hands of some disgruntled comic geek today, 'Blood & Iron' is everything I hoped it would be and more. The animation is perfect, bringing the characters to life but not slick enough to render them featureless and bland, good enough to breathe energy and existence into Mignola's artwork, but careful enough not to ruin it, and Hellboy Ron Perlman made the character of Hellboy his own in the movie, and again he steaks the show here, sucking you into every frame of the film and the story - a story that involves Vampires and their rebirth, Hecate, Harpies, ghosts and the past returning to literally haunt those involved. This is classic Hellboy, the comic brought to perfect life via the medium of full screen animated entertainment, and quite possibly the most fun that you'll have with a 'cartoon' all year. The BPRD just bumped back... Tim Mass Movement

• King Of Punk: The Documentary DVD (ETIT Productions)

Kind of strange this one. 'King Of Punk' does the usual charting the rise of punk rock thing, trying to establish why and when and how, with a far more interesting take on things. The film makers (Ken and Julie van Schooten) also filmed Pat Clement (yea, Pat FNS himself...) and a teenage girl punk rock band, OBGYN (who are actually pretty good) over a couple of years, and they cut both Pat's and OBGYN's stories in with the documentary footage. As you'd expect, the documentary stuff is fairly standard, but the DVD is worth watching for the two previously mentioned stories. OBGYN's is by far the best, watching the band get together, play shows, record and then fall apart as they start to make the transition from teens to adults (and how opinions, tastes and preferences change in that period), and the footage kind of represents that growing awareness, and makes for great viewing, and Pat Clement's story is kind of similar. I guess the footage is kind of old, as Pat was still doing 'No. 13' and about to release his first couple of 7" singles, so by my reckoning that makes it at least four years old... It's interesting watching Pat (seeing him get more and more tattoos in between film breaks), and his drive and attitude toward punk rock and HC, his belief in himself and what's he doing. Sure, he can be a little arrogant, but hell, that's just Pat. As a contemporary film (OBGYN and FNS), 'King Of Punk' is fascinating, looking at two of the participants in an ever changing musical scene, but as a documentary that treads some of the same old ground it's kind of flat. I just wish that the van Schooten's had focussed on the contemporary and made a film about the Pat and OBGYN... Worth checking out. Tim Mass Movement

Megadeth - That One Night: Live in Buenos Aires DVD (Image Entertainment)

Megadeth are an amazing live band and they have, over the course of 25 years, put out a lot of classic albums. I am sure any live show, filmed where ever on this globe, would be proof of that legendary status. However what is making this particular live DVD, filmed in the Argentinian capital on the 9th of October 2005, such an amazing experience has got to be the audience. The energy they have and their knowledge of all these Megadeth classics is something I have never witnessed before. They are even singing along with riffs and melodies from the front to the back of the hall. It really adds something special to songs like "Symphony of Destruction" or "Hangar 18". These people go mad over every single song, "Wake Up Dead", "Peace Sells", "Kick the Chair", "A Tout Le Monde" and even a special song called "Coming Home"... the list is seems to be neverending. Sound and video are excellent, and as we know Megadeth there's no elaborate live show, just amazing metal. This disc has 18 beauties, but it is said the band played a couple of songs more which unfortunately didn't make this DVD. I wonder why? You can never have enough Megadeth. Martijn Welzen

Monster Man DVD (2004, Michael Davis, Prism R2)

"This can't be the end! I was gonna fuck my sister!" Every once in a while you stumble over a movie which should be utter tripe, but turns out to be an absolute gem. MONSTER MAN is very definitely the latter - a horror film that blends sick splatter with some gross AMERICAN PIE-style humour to deliver an insanely entertaining flick.

Plot-wise we're in JEEPERS CREEPERS territory as two frat boys drive to a wedding along the back roads of America, only to invoke the fury of a disfigured killer who terrorises them in his customised monster truck.

Along the way they pick up a sexy hitchhiker with a dark secret and stumble over the killer's lair in a redneck town where the locals have all lost body parts to the lunatic driver - but why is he taking them?

I know it sounds awful, but trust me, this film is ace. The truck is a rusty home-made deal that has had some serious hydraulics installed so its 'jaws' can snap and snarl at prey. Seeing as all the production money went on the truck, the killer is just a lank-haired guy in an icky mask, but he becomes an instant horror icon after the kids christen him with his very own serial killer handle - 'Fuck Face'. Move over, Freddy!

One of the frat boys is a repressed virgin, the other is a party hog, but as these thin characterisations are played for genuine laughs, it doesn't hurt the film at all. And the gross gags all work on a crude, lewd level. Examples? How about the scene where the frat boys try to siphon gasoline out of a camper van, but plumb into the septic tank instead? Or the bit where the killer dumps oozing road kill in the boys' motel room and the party dude accidentally performs oral sex on the putrid flesh? Then there's the scene where he ends up cheek to cheek with a decaying corpse after the monster truck crushes the car he is cowering in. Yeuch! The R1 disc offers decent extra features (the R2 only has a trailer), but in either form, MONSTER MAN makes for perfect Friday night entertainment. Watch it with a few beers. LIAM RONAN.

• New Model Army: Live 16 12 03 DVD (2004, Dave Meehan Secret Films R0)

What exactly is the appeal of New Model Army? I've been a fan for more than 20 years and I still can't put my finger on it. What I do know is that they embody a punk work ethic sorely lacking from some supposedly credible bands and continue to enjoy global success with barely any coverage from the media or music press. Since their earliest incarnation as the Hustler Street Band, they've been peddling a brand of agit-rock that remains peculiarly original - no one else sounds exactly like them. Frontman Justin Sullivan is one of the greatest narrative songwriters the UK has ever produced, yet much of his best work has taken place since the band's success peaked in the late 80s/early 90s. They're not fashionable, but I've seen young kids, teenagers, old punks and retired couples at their shows. Thrashers Anacrusis and the mighty Sepultura have covered their songs, and as demonstrated by this excellent DVD, their following is fanatically loyal. Basically a greatest hits package without any hits, it features songs from all stages of the band's long career - from the bass-heavy sound of Drag It Down that defined their early days to the harmonica folk rock of Poison Street and the synth 'n' guitar politics of rare tracks like Courage. Green & Grey is here, of course, alongside Stupid Questions, Get Me Out and 51st State, but lesser known songs such as R&R, The Charge and White Light also get a welcome airing, as does some of Justin's solo work (the wonderful Ocean Rising). My only gripe is that the concert wasn't double or triple the length so the band could have worked in some of their other material... This is a fantastic DVD from a criminally underappreciated band. LIAM RONAN.

• Onslaught - Live Polish Assault 2007 DVD (Metal Mind)

Back in the 80's, for some reason, it was mostly American and German thrash that appealed to me. British bands like Xentrix, Sabbath and Onslaught were cool, but didn't have that magic touch, even though these three examples were all quite different musically. Now seeing one of them on a recently recorded DVD, I still can't put the finger on it to be honest. Recorded live in Warsaw on the 12th of February 2007, Onslaught are loud, tight and have fun in playing their old school metal tracks again. The sound and video is good and the crowd is hanging on the bands lips with every riff played. Decent thrash indeed on a great looking DVD, but it still lacks that thrash magic. The DVD is subtitled "100% live Thrash", and it is, but I guess that's just not enough. Still if you already liked Onslaught, or are willing to dive into some of the British metal history you can get great live versions of classics like "Let the Be Death", "Metal Forces" and my favorite "Flame of the Anti Christ". Bit silly though, seeing middle aged metalheads still flirting with satanism in a Venomesque sort of way. The extras on this DVD are cool too, bonus video, bonus audio and other nice goodies. Martijn Welzen.

Re-animator DVD (1985 Stuart Gordon, Anchor Bay UK R2)

The mid 1980s were a bad time for horror films. The MPAA and the BBFC were cracking down hard and each new genre epic seemed to be even more bloodless than the last - I lost count of how many Fangoria articles featured scenes that never made it into the final cut. Then RE-ANIMATOR came along to spoil us rotten. You really had to be there to experience the full effect. Right in the middle of a gloomy dry season, this film offered fans a clever, literate script, extreme gore and blacker-than-black humour. Everyone remembers the scene where a drooling, decapitated head gives, um, head to a captive girl, but what about the torso that stumbles along crashing into furniture while its freshly removed noggin watches in disbelief? How about the liberal application of a paper spike to solve the problem of a decapitated cranium that won't remain upright? Or the reanimated cat that ends up being thrown around the laboratory like a football?

Director Stuart Gordon delivers the bedlam with such obvious glee, it was as if he was daring the censors to take him on. They did, and they lost - RE-ANIMATOR was released in America unrated and developed such a reputation that its success was secured. Even Arnold Schwarzenegger was a fan, visiting the set at the urging of his body double who was playing the role of a fresh corpse. The film tells the tale of Herbert West, an intense young medical student who has developed a serum that can reanimate dead tissue and return the recently deceased back to life. When the greedy Dr. Hill tries to steal the serum, West decapitates him with a shovel. Then he brings both Hill's severed head and headless body back to life, just for kicks. But Hill is not going to let a little thing like death thwart his ambitions, and he starts building a small army of reanimated dead folk down in the university morgue. Only West can stop him... You owe it to yourself to see RE-ANIMATOR. It is one of the few bonafide classic horror films of the 1980s, and still stands up as a rare treat today. LIAM RONAN.