

BLOODLUST ZOMBIES (2011) 8/8

D: Dan Lantz. Alexis Texas, Adam Danoff, Janice Marie, Lauren Todd, Dan Lantz, Robert Heath. 80 mins. (Breaking Glass Pictures) 8/11

Bloodlust Zombies is a stupid, insipid zombie "comedy" about a research facility that looks suspiciously like someone's apartment house, in "lockdown" after a zombie virus-infected cat escapes and bites a number of random folks, turning them into "bloodlust zombies." Porn star Texas shows her stuff as a secretary, while Danoff attempts to bring humor to his sleazy office worker who is trying to survive being attacked by half-naked infected zombie chicks. Director Lantz plays an oafish security guard, while Todd portrays a spunky temp with a gun. There's really nothing new added to the whole zombie genre here. People get bitten, they change, they attack, they get shot, they attack again...yawn! My advice: watch **Shaun of the Dead** again and send this one back to the direct-to-video morgue.

—Dwight Kemper

THE BOXER AND THE BOMBSHELL

(THE TENDER HOOK) (2008) 8/8

D: Jonathan Ogilvie. Hugo Weaving, Rose Byrne, Matt Le Nevez, John Batchelor, Pia Miranda. 99 mins. (Screen Media) 9/11

Aussie gangster McHeath (Weaving) rules the liquor trade and the fight game, enabling him to run his own nightclub/boxing arena and keep a fancy mistress named Iris (Byrne). He recruits rising boxer Art Walker (Le Nevez) into his organization, inducting him into his inner circle's corruption. Director/screenwriter Ogilvie cleverly introduces original elements which may keep viewers from noticing the stale plot. This feature is set in Jazz Age Sydney, which leads him to explore the colonial subtext that divides the English and the Australians. British transplant McHeath views his peers as culturally inferior colonials and reads the UK's *Daily Express*. The locals view such individuals as "Pommie bastards." McHeath earns contempt because he slices his errant colleagues with a straight razor. Weaving almost steals the show with his cultured cruelty. He is also a competent vocalist who can "sell" a song—a necessary skill because his "jazz numbers" are actually arrangements of Leonard Cohen and Bob Dylan compositions! Byrne plays Iris with fortitude; she knows the difference between a kept woman and a bimbo. So does Miranda, as Daisy, the girl who announces the rounds at McHeath's boxing matches while jiggling to the crowd. Le Nevez looks like a boxer of that period, but he is outclassed by other cast members. This drama works because Ogilvie takes DVD viewers to places that they have never been.

—Ronald Charles Epstein

CHATROOM (2010) 8/1/2

D: Hideo Nakata. Aaron Johnson, Imogen Poots, Matthew Beard, Daniel Kaluuya, Hannah Murray, Megan Dodds. 97 mins. (Screen Media Films) 6/11

Alert Britons warn their friends that certain individuals are "mad, bad and dangerous to know." This is an apt description of William (Johnson), the sorry son of Grace (Dodds), the author of a successful series of children's books about time travel. Once he was merely a wild-haired dysfunctional youth. Now he has cleaned up his act and organized "chat rooms," such as "Chelsea Teens," which attract teenagers who view him as a cool guide. Big mistake. He merely becomes a smarter psychopath who uses his charisma to cruelly manipulate others, especially a chronically depressed boy named Jim (Beard). Since this film deals with cyberspace, this concept is animated by its depiction as a floridly colored building, organized into strange rooms. Director Nakata assumes that a little surrealism may attract techno peasants and/or Luddites. Men in those, or other, categories may be more interested in Poots, who plays posh Eva; women may view Johnson as that latest British Bad Boy Robert Pattinson's possible successor. Viewers who appreciate credible acting will enjoy Beard's harrowing performance as Jim, the withdrawn youth struggling for his sanity. People who crave great directors should look elsewhere. Including a fictional version of J.K. Rowling may be an inspired topical touch, but Screen Media Films will need Harry Potter's magic wand to ensure that this DVD will be successful.

—Ronald Charles Epstein

THE DEATH OF ANDY KAUFMAN (2011)

8/8

D: Christopher Maloney. Andy Kaufman, Alan Abel, Christopher Maloney, Bob Zmuda. 120 mins. (Wild Eye Releasing/MVD) 7/11

The deeper this documentary digs into the possibility that the eponymous conceptual comic staged his own demise as his career-crowning put-on, the weaker and wackier the argument grows. That Kaufman was intrigued by the idea long before he was stricken with cancer is convincingly documented here. When professional prankster Alan (*Is There Sex After Death?*) Abel pulled a similar stunt, tricking *The New York Times* into running his obit in 1980, Kaufman relentlessly grilled his fellow hoaxer on the mechanics of the con. (Underground filmmaker/*Hollywood Babylon* author Kenneth Anger infamously paid for his own mock obituary in the *Village Voice* in 1967, a move that fooled yours truly, among many others, for years—perhaps not too surprising in light of that avant-garde auteur's prolonged inactivity.) The comic likewise confided his interest in the play to longtime

ALEXIS TEXAS



sidekick/current keeper of the Kaufman flame Bob Zmuda. While such a hoax wouldn't appear to be beyond the subversive surrealist's ken, the logistical realities of staging and sustaining such an elaborate stunt—beginning with producing a doppelganger corpse—seem ultimately out of reach, despite the insistence of several onscreen "witnesses" who claim to have encountered the late comic in locales ranging from Taos, New Mexico's burnt-out hippie havens to Santa Monica's homeless shelters. Not likely. Where Maloney's movie does succeed is in saluting the seminal life that Andy lived in the brief but bountiful 35 years allotted him. Kaufman excelled in exploring the comedy of manipulation, and Maloney captures those skills in priceless clips of Andy at audience-tweaking work in clubs like NYC's The Improv (where we first saw him), on *Saturday Night Live*, as Latka on *Taxi* (by far his least taxing and most lucrative gig), his televised bits as alter ego/sleazy Vegas lounge "entertainer" Tony Clifton, and his long-running, if increasingly (purposefully?) unfunny reign as an "inter-gender" wrestler. With its crackpot theorizing, **The Death of Andy Kaufman** ultimately doesn't offer much hope for the satirist's secret survival but it does, unlike the glossy, grotty Jim Carrey biopic **Man on the Moon**, rate as a must for Andy addicts, deserving a place on the DVD shelf next to Rhino Video's **My Breakfast with Blassie (VS #72)** and, if you can find it, the brilliant 1981 TV special **Andy Kaufman's Sound Stage Show (VS #3)**, originally out on the long-defunct Lightning Video VHS label. DVD extras include a bonus interview with the filmmaker and trailers for other Wild Eye releases. Andy, we hardly knew ye—and we believe that's just the way ye wanted it.

—The Phantom