

SLASHER SEND-UPS

SCREAM PARK (2012) ♂♂

D: Cary Hill. Wendy Wygant, Steve Rudzinski, Alicia Maria Marcucci, Kyle Riordan, Tyler Kale, Kailey Marie Harris, Dean Jacobs, Kevin "Ogre" Ogilvie, Nicole Beattie, Brian McDaniel, Ian Lemmon, Doug Bradley. 82 mins. (Wild Eye Releasing) 4/14

On the closing night of Frightland Amusement Park, the staff assembles after-hours for a farewell party. Soon afterwards, a mysterious van shows up and two creepy characters (Ogilvie, Lemmon) start bumping off the employees. As the party gets started and employees pair off, the bodies begin piling up. It's the familiar set-up from hundreds of slasher films, and while **Scream Park** is intended as an homage to the genre, it doesn't bring anything new to the party. Some of the kills are inventive, while others are fairly mediocre. There are some missed opportunities to use the amusement park setting to its full effect. I really kept waiting for the rides and attractions to be more involved in the deaths; while watching, I thought of several that would have been far more gruesome and entertaining than what we get. And, for a park called Frightland, it seemed to be a bit more generic than expected. Doug Bradley's "special appearance" is pretty much a waste of his talents and comes very late in the film. Kevin Ogilvie (aka Nivek Ogre of Skinny Puppy) plays the main killer Iggy with intensity but has no real backstory or motivation. He and Ogre (Lemmon) are just hired thugs. Although it's set in present times, it does effectively evoke an '80s vibe. Otherwise, it just doesn't have enough gusto to elevate it above just another slasher flick on the pile. Extras include a commentary track with director Hill, bloopers, and trailers for **Scream Park** and other Wild Eye releases. Slasher completists may get a few thrills.

CAESAR & OTTO'S DEADLY XMAS (2012) ♂♂ 1/2

D: Dave Campfield. Deron Miller, Brinke Stevens, Robert Z'Dar, Dave Campfield, Paul Chomicki, Joe Estevez, Debbie Rochon, Linnea Quigley. 83 mins. (Wild Eye Releasing) 11/13

In this sequel to the grade-Z horror spoof **Caesar & Otto's Summer Camp Massacre**, Caesar (Campfield) and Otto Denovio (Chomicki) are loser half-brothers trying to make it in Hollywood as background characters, stand-ins, walk-ons, etc. When everyone cancels on Caesar's Thanksgiving dinner except the bros' father (Scott Aguilar), his latest trophy wife (Dawn Burdue), and Otto's dominatrix ex-girlfriend Sashi (Stevens), a Santa-obsessed psycho killer (Miller) begins a slaughter spree based on the list of Caesar's guests who bailed on him. Meanwhile, Otto becomes fixated on hunting down an old high school crush (Summer Ferguson) he

learns has moved to California. As a last resort to make money, the two half-brothers take jobs for a bizarre Christmas-themed organization, even though Caesar has a Santa phobia because of a story his grandfather (Troma honcho Lloyd Kaufman) told him as a child. Eventually, Caesar convinces his bosses to make a low-budget horror film, which allows for some **Plan 9 From Outer Space** gags. As with many horror parodies, the humor is hit and miss. However, the cast is game for just about anything, and the writing is fast-paced. As a spoof, it gives nods to plenty of previous Christmas-themed slasher films and builds up to a ridiculously over-the-top finale. This is often a detriment to comedies but actually plays out here. Plenty of horror regulars have cameos, including Quigley as Caesar's former scream queen agent, Rochon as a 911 dispatcher, and Estevez and Z'dar as themselves. Campfield and Chomicki make a decent comedy duo, even if the half-brothers set-up is completely unbelievable. They combine elements of Abbott and Costello, the Three Stooges, and even Mike Myers and Dana Carvey. 2009's **C&OSCM** was only 76 minutes long (and contained the short **Caesar & Otto Meet Dracula's Lawyer**), and **Deadly Xmas** might have benefited from some additional trimming. The end credits proclaim the comedy duo will return in **Caesar & Otto's Paranormal Halloween**, and the third time might be the charm for Campfield and company.

—Dan Cziraky

SERIAL KILLER CULTURE (2014)

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D: John Borowski. Matthew Aaron, John Borowski, Joe Coleman. 110 mins. (Waterfront Productions) 4/14

Filmmaker John Borowski presents another fascinating documentary that touches on serial killers, this time focusing on the culture surrounding killers like John Wayne Gacy and Jeffrey Dahmer. Since the days of Jack the Ripper, there have been true-crime enthusiasts obsessed with the acts of horror committed by these psychopathic murderers. Many take their obsessions in the direction of trying to solve unsolved crimes, while others, the subjects of Borowski's inquiry, prefer to court the killers who have been put behind bars in the hopes of getting special trophies. I should warn you that the first subject of Borowski's investigation goes on for quite a while. At first blush, you may think he's the only collector being interviewed. His story is fascinating, to be sure, but I assure you, it's not the only one. All told, there are 13 artists and collectors interviewed for this film. We learn, for instance, that Gacy produces his clown art in an almost assembly-line fashion. If he really likes you, he'll do a special portrait just for you, as when he featured the collector's son as part of the work. You'd think this would unnerve the collector, but no, he hangs it proudly in his collection. In fact, to get their prized pieces, many collectors often write to and even visit the objects of their obsessions, almost like lovers, hoping to score a gift

from their favorite psycho. Often, both admirer and the focus of that admiration share one common trait: they're obsessed with death. We meet musicians and artists inspired by serial killers. One artist drew a graphic novel on the life and crimes of Jeffrey Dahmer and took heat from a public that felt he was profiting from the deaths of Dahmer's victims. We go to Milwaukee and take the Dahmer Tour. We listen to a heavy metal band whose songs and performances are dedicated to serial killers. Borowski also turns the camera on himself and talks about his previous films, **H.H. Holmes: America's First Serial Killer (VS #53)**, **Albert Fish: In Sin He Found Salvation (VS #62)**, and **Carl Panzram: The Spirit of Hatred and Vengeance (VS #86)**. We even get a brief dedication to the late actor Tony Jay, who narrated these prior films. One thing is vividly brought to light: The people who collect serial killer memorabilia are just as fascinating in their own right as the subjects of their obsessions. If you're interested in getting into the heads of some serious collectors of horrific crimes, **Serial Killer Culture** is a must-see.

—Detective Dwight Kemper

7 BOXES (2012) ♂♂♂

D: Tana Schembori and Juan Carlos Maneglia. Celso Franco, Victor Sosa, Lali Gonzalez, Nico Garcia, Paletita. 100 mins. (Breaking Glass) 5/14

We are in Asuncion, Paraguay, at the dawn of the smart phone age. Victor (Franco) ekes out a living ferrying parcels about on his wheelbarrow. Entranced by the idea of being on TV, he covets a phone with a video function. To that end, he takes a (for him) high-paying job delivering seven mysterious boxes. Doing so puts him in the sights of violent rival Nelson (Sosa). Unfortunately, what is contained in those boxes is not only linked to criminal activity but incompetent criminal activity. Victor is soon on the run, fighting to keep both the boxes and his life. His only ally is his street-wise friend Liz (Gonzalez). Schembori and Maneglia's energetic film has the structure of a farce and the intensity of a thriller. Foot chases, conflicting agendas, miscommunications and close calls ratchet up the suspense and, not infrequently, the laughs. There is a strong vein of black humor running through the film, and while the set-up might lead one to believe the boxes are pure McGuffins, we do find out what is inside them, at which point the dark lunacy rises to an even higher level. But for all the craziness, the film also grounds itself firmly in the grim realities of its social and economic context. We never lose sight of the desperation that drives the heroes and villains. Franco and Gonzalez are an engaging pair, both convincing teenagers who, though aware of the dangers that surround them, are also sufficiently caught up in their own dreams and delusions that they don't always make the smart move. All in all, this is a terrific, exciting work, right down to its perfectly judged final shot.

—David Annandale