



Exterminators of the Year 3000

has cleaned it up and ported over a couple of extras from the 2010 Code Red re-release; you can hear how star Robert Iannucci held up the production in order to get paid and other not-so surprising tales from the film's production.

As far as rip-offs go, *Exterminators of the Year 3000* might not blow your Thunderdome, but it ain't no Sad Max, either.

DAVE ALEXANDER

SLEAZED TO MEET YA

MARK OF THE DEVIL (1970) Blu-ray/DVD

Starring Udo Kier, Herbert Lom and Olivera Vuco
Directed by Michael Armstrong
Written by Michael Armstrong and Adrian Hoven
Arrow

Mark of the Devil is undoubtedly sleazy. Conceived as a knockoff of 1968's *Witchfinder General*, it revels in scenes of beautiful, often naked, young women being tortured by ugly men with uglier hearts. Appropriately, the film's American distributor offered patrons free vomit bags emblazoned with the promise/warning "Guaranteed to upset your stomach."

But *Mark of the Devil* is also damn good. It boasts superior production values (it was shot in beautiful, remote parts of Austria), awful villains in Herbert Lom (*Murders in the Rue Morgue*), as a corrupt bishop, and Reggie Nalder (*Salem's Lot*) as an evil witch finder, and a script that lays bare the church's exploitative, corrupt and misogynist nature. Even blank-faced newcomer Udo Kier, playing Lom's pretty acolyte,

can't spoil the morally deplorable fun. Audiences loved it, critics spat on it, and its violence – including a nasty tongue extraction – got it banned in multiple countries.

Success aside, *MotD* has a spotty post-release history. Most VHS and DVD versions were

sourced from degraded prints and excised various bits of sex and gore. But UK-based Arrow Films has brought back all the boobs and blood in a glorious transfer that makes the film's reds that much redder. A terrific trove of bonus features makes this the film's definitive release.

Chief among the extras is a lively commentary with director Michael Armstrong moderated by journalist Calum Waddell. Armstrong details his art-versus-commerce struggles with actor/producer Adrian Hoven, who took over directing close to the end of the shoot and locked Armstrong out of post-production. Further details of their contentious relationship can be found in a candid interview with Herbert Fux who played a particularly enthusiastic torturer. Kier, by comparison, appears bored and openly hostile in his interview.

The set's other featurettes are top-notch, including *Mark of the Times*, a fascinating look at Britain's early-'70s horror boom, and *Hallmark of the Devil*, a reminiscence about Hallmark, the American distributor responsible for *MotD*'s outrageous ad campaign and for importing much Euro-sleaze into American cinemas back in the day.

This digitally-spiffed version of *Mark of the Devil* is about as close to respectable as this unclassy classic will ever get.

SEAN PLUMMER

BRUNO'S BLOODY GOOD-BYE

ISLAND OF THE LIVING DEAD (2007)

Starring Yvette Yzon, Gaetano Russo and Alvin Anson
Directed by Bruno Mattei
Written by Antonio Tenori, Giovanni Paolucci and Bruno Mattei

ZOMBIES: THE BEGINNING (2007)

Starring Yvette Yzon, Alvin Anson and Paul Holme
Directed by Bruno Mattei
Written by Antonio Tentori and Giovanni Paolucci
Intervision

Bruno Mattei ain't no Dario or Lucio, but his bad movies have made for some good times. Watch his remarkably shameless *Dawn of the*

Dead rip-off *Hell of the Living Dead* (1980) or the bizarre *Zombie 3* (1988) with a few inebriated pals and you'll know what I mean. The late filmmaker was there during Italy's heyday of gore cinema, and that authenticity is what makes Intervision's release of his final films, *Island of the Living Dead* and *Zombies: The Beginning* so special.

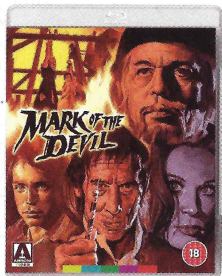
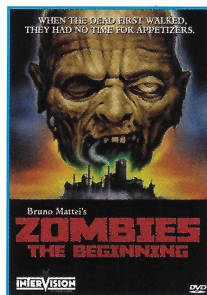
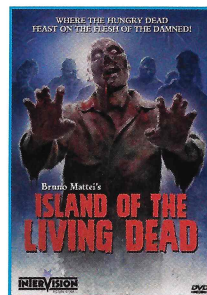
In a dramatic first sequence, *Island* opens in the 1600s, on a Spanish colony in the Pacific Islands. The natives and conquistadors alike are succumbing to a curse that sees the dead returning to life to devour the living. Forward to present time (which, thanks to video stock and some really odd wardrobe choices looks more like 1997), a group of dough-headed treasure hunters find the island and investigate in search of gold, but naturally the living dead (from lumbering headless bodies to fanged, feral humanoids) are there to spoil their fun. The crew's lone survivor Sharon (Yvette Yzon) narrowly escapes on a MacGyvered raft.

Zombies: The Beginning (Mattei's final film) starts with Sharon's rescue, before placing her before the bosses at the Tyler Corporation, who snuffle in disbelief at her outrageous story of Spanish gold and the zombies that protect it. Fired, she takes refuge amongst a Buddhist congregation, trying in vain to curb the nightmares that have been plaguing her since her brush with the living dead. Several months later, she returns to the island with a dozen soldiers, only to find that the company has been experimenting on the ghouls, creating a new species of creature. At this point, *Zombies* be-

comes a full-blown *Aliens* retread, complete with wisecracking marines, chestbursting and a kick-ass lady who isn't shy with the old flamethrower.

Bruno Mattei's late-phase playbook had no place for post-*28 Days Later* zombie antics, so absent are screeching undead athletes and social commentary. No nu-metal, no hyper-editing and no Hollywood stars. Instead, *Island of the Living Dead* and *Zombies: The Beginning* favour old-school ghouls, ancient curses, secret islands and practical gore effects that wouldn't be out of place in any proper Italian gutmuncher. Mattei never seemed to learn anything in the last 30-odd years, and given today's climate of big-budget snoozers, hipster satires and soulless cash-ins, that's a very good thing.

Rest in peace, Bruno!



TAL ZIMERMAN