



THE GORE-MET

MENU: GIALLI SERVED THRICE



Arrow Films is at the forefront of a campaign to reissue some of the best examples of the lurid Italian suspense thriller known as the *giallo* on Blu-ray. And the results are stunning!

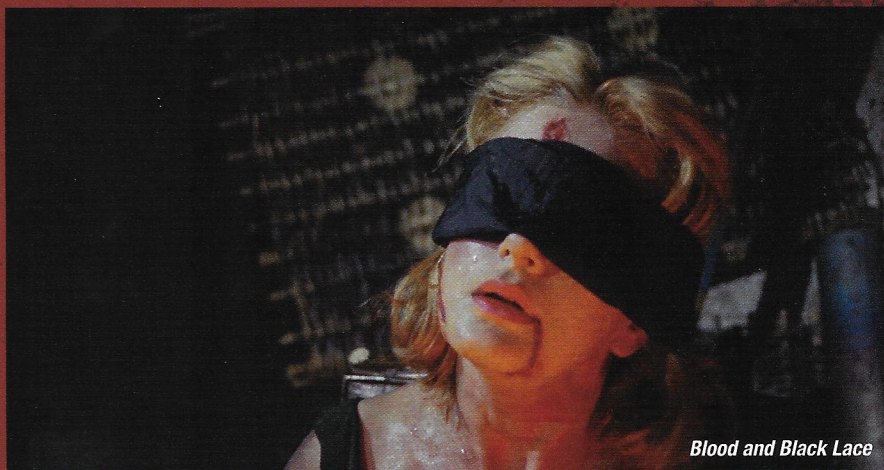
Mario Bava's *Blood and Black Lace* (1964) is the quintessential giallo. The style, elegance, grace and brutality of the best examples of the genre all spring from his baroque, Technicolor fever dream.

In the opening, a Christian Haute Couture fashion house model is strangled on the grounds during a violent thunderstorm. The accidental discovery of her diary and the scandalous details it may contain result in a number of murders by a masked, black-gloved killer; a dogged police inspector is determined to apprehend the murderer.

Bava is the pioneer of the red herring, a plot device used specifically in gialli to distract the audience. A raised eyebrow, a sidelong glance or a nervous close-up makes everyone a suspect. Bava also reinvented Alfred Hitchcock's murder set piece, carefully composing kills intended to out-craft the master. The face pressed against the red-hot wood stove still shocks.

Previously, the best release was the two-disc Unslashed Collector's Edition DVD put out by VCI Entertainment in 2005. Unfortunately, it was sourced from videotape. Arrow went all in with a 2K scan of the original camera negatives and painstakingly restored this for an HD transfer that no doubt looks better than the first print struck 52 years ago.

Ported over from the VCI set is the commentary track by *Video Watchdog* editor Tim Lucas and the two episodes of *The Sinister Image* featuring an interview with star Cameron Mitchell. Exclusive to this release are the 55-minute documentary *Psycho Analysis*, the 38-minute visual essay *Gender and Giallo* and a ten-minute featurette in which giallo revivalists Hélène Cattet and Bruno Forzani (*Amer*, *The Strange Color of Your Body's Tears*) dissect the genre and Bava's significance to it. The extras are rounded out with high-def transfers of the original trailer and the US credit sequence, as well as *Blood and Bava*, an eleven-minute segment of a panel



Blood and Black Lace

discussion in which Dario Argento and Bava's son Lamberto discuss the elder Bava's work on Argento's *Inferno* (1980), and Ryan Haysom and Jon Britt's "neo-giallo" short *Yellow* (2012).

In 2006, NoShame Films released *The Luciano Ercoli Death Box Set*, a three-disc offering that included two of the three films Ercoli made with his wife, Spanish actress Nieves Navarro (credited as Susan Scott), the Italian-Spanish co-productions *Death Walks on High Heels* (1971) and *Death Walks at Midnight* (1972), along with a compilation CD of soundtrack cues by composer Stelvio Cipriani. Arrow has revisited both titles and presents gorgeous new 2K restorations packaged together as the limited *Death Walks Twice: Two Films*

by Luciano Ercoli box. While lesser examples of the genre, they have their respective charms.

In the first film, Navarro stars as Nicole, a Parisian nightclub dancer who finds herself the focus of a police investigation and the target of a masked killer with piercing blue eyes after her estranged jewel thief father is stabbed to death in the opening scene. Both the cops and the voice-altered maniac are in search of a stolen cache of diamonds. Nicole suspects her abusive boyfriend Michel (Simon Andreu) is her mysterious tormentor and flees to the English countryside with a lovelorn doctor. Death follows...

While this one is dry (two murders and too much talk) and falls firmly into the mystery camp, it does sport a little nudity and some genuinely suspenseful

moments. Extras include *From Spain With Love*, a 24-minute interview with Ercoli and Navarro; *Master of the Giallo*, a 32-minute interview with screenwriter Ernesto Gastaldi; *Death Walks to the Beat*, a 26-minute interview with composer Stelvio Cipriani; two trailers for the feature; and a commentary track by Lucas.

The superior second film features Navarro as Valentina, a fashion model who agrees to take an experimental hallucinogen for a story her tabloid reporter friend Giovanni (Andreu) is working on. While tripping, she sees a brutal murder in the apartment opposite her flat, in which an older man in oversized sunglasses smashes a spiked iron glove into a woman's face. The apartment has been vacant for months, though, and even Valentina doubts the veracity of what she witnessed — until the killer begins stalking her and the body count mounts.

This is the more conventional giallo of the pair, with the bloody deaths and convoluted plot typical of the genre and a rousing rooftop climax that ties it all together. A little comedy, decidedly quirky characters and a greater variety of exotic locations distinguish this film from its more workmanlike forbearer. Extras include the TV version of the film, which has footage not in the theatrical version; *Crime Does Pay*, a 31-minute interview with writer Ernesto Gastaldi; *Desperately Seeking Susan*, a 28-minute visual essay on the films of Ercoli and Navarro; and another commentary track by the busy Lucas. When it comes to gialli reissues, it goes without saying that Arrow is really hitting the mark.

