

MONDO ITALO!

By Rob Freese

ARROW VIDEO

(\$39.95 2-disc Blu-ray + DVD) 7/16

BLOOD AND BLACK LACE (1964)

⸞⸞⸞⸞

D: Mario Bava. Cameron Mitchell, Eva Bartok, Thomas Reiner, Ariana Gorini, Dante DiPaolo, Luciano Pigozzi. 88 mins.

At Countess Christina Como's (Bartok) fashion house, the pretty young models are being stalked by a dark-clad figure whose identity is kept hidden behind a mask and within the shadows. Isabella (France Ungaro) is the first to die by the hand of the maniac during a storm. When Nicole (Gorini) finds Isabella's diary, everyone is suspicious of what might be in it. The diary proves to supply sufficient motive for our stalker to trap Nicole and kill her with a spiked glove. Max Marian (Mitchell) is high on the police inspector's list of suspects, but all the suspects are let loose from custody after another murder occurs. As the winding plot of this superior thriller works its way to its finale, numerous models die in horrible fashion and the dark murderer's motives are revealed. To say more is to risk spoiling the surprises Maestro Bava has in store for you. He plays on your nerves with fine precision, creating a tight thriller with plenty of genuine shocks. The violent murders are quite disturbing and still retain their ability to jolt viewers who think they've seen it all. It's also interesting to note that the police inspectors prove to be rather inept in figuring out the mystery, so you never feel like they are ever protecting anyone from danger. While most scholars go to his 1963 thriller *The Evil Eye/The Girl Who Knew Too Much* (VS #63) as the start of the giallo cycle, I think *Blood and Black Lace* exemplifies what the perfect giallo can deliver. It blends sex and violence in a way that set the standard for how the Italian thrillers would be made for the next couple of decades. And it did it without being gratuitously sleazy, even if we are presented with pathetic hopheads looking for smack, blackmailing bimbos and murderous whack-a-doos. The film is also a triumph of technical skill and style, as Bava's camera prowls like a silent cat among all the characters' storylines. The color scheme and lighting throughout are nothing short of scrumptious. The film is a delight for the eyes, and it's easy to see where Dario Argento got his inspiration for his giallo offerings. All around, the cast is wonderful, especially Mitchell and Bartok, who basically plays house mother to the models. Arrow rocks its 2K HD presentation with a cornucopia of extras that include new subtitles for the Italian-language track, a new commentary by Tim Lucas, the giallo docu-

mentary *Psycho Analysis*, the visual essay *Gender & Giallo*, two episodes of David Del Valle's *The Sinister Image* TV show featuring an interview with Cameron Mitchell, the alternate U.S. opening, trailer and plenty more. This is a beautiful presentation of one of the genre's most important contributions. You can't consider yourself either a fan of Bava or giallos until you've survived *Blood and Black Lace*!

BLUE UNDERGROUND

(\$39.98 3-disc Blu-ray Limited Edition)

10/16

MANHATTAN BABY (1982)⸞⸞⸞

D: Lucio Fulci. Christopher Connelly, Laura Lenzi, Brigitta Boccoli, Giovanni Frezza, Cinzia de Ponti, Cosimo Cinieri. 89 mins.

Archeologist Connelly's daughter is given an accursed amulet that awakens an ancient demon and also allows the girl to travel to an alternate reality. When the demon attempts to take over the little girl's body, an exorcist is called in to do some soul-saving. Scripter Dardano Sacchetti uses themes from *The Exorcist*, *The Omen* and *The Awakening* to help fashion this off-kilter demonic-possession story. The flick includes only limited gore but does boast a couple of cool *Beyon-desque* desolate landscapes where unfortunate souls are cast away. (*Manhattan Baby's* one standout scene involves a chap who is attacked and gored by a flock of reanimated stuffed birds.) The child actors are quite good, but some of the optical effects are extremely cheesy. *Manhattan Baby* is far from Fulci's best but is worth a look for the fright maestro's fans, especially in *Blue Underground's* gala 3-disc Limited Edition. Among the copious extras are an hour-long interview with composer Fabio Frizzi, *For the Birds* (an interview with costar Cosimo Cinieri), *20 Years with Fulci* (interview with makeup effects artist Maurizio Trani), *Beyond the Living Dead* (interview with co-writer Sacchetti), Stephen Thrower on *Manhattan Baby* (interview with the author of *Beyond Terror: The Films of Lucio Fulci*), *Manhattan Baby Suite* (a live studio performance by Fabio Frizzi), theatrical trailer, poster & still gallery, collectible booklet, and a bonus CD of Frizzi's Original Motion Picture Soundtrack.

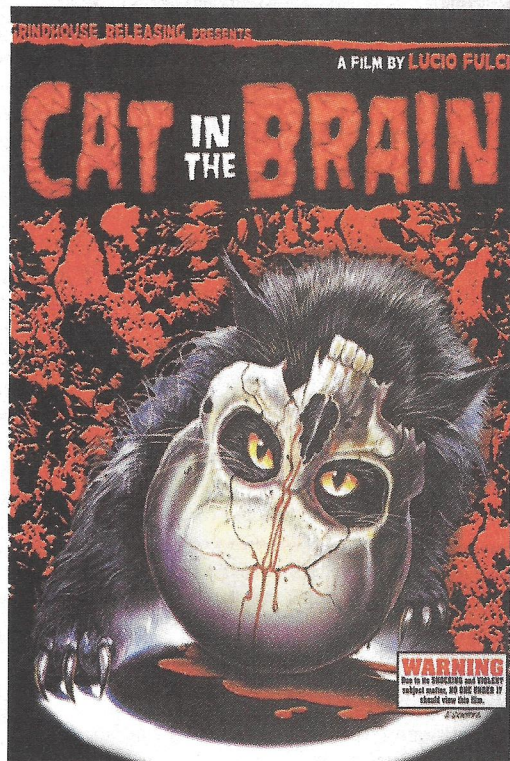
GRINDHOUSE RELEASING

(\$39.95 3-disc Blu-ray + CD) 7/16

CAT IN THE BRAIN (1990)⸞⸞⸞

D: Lucio Fulci. Lucio Fulci, David L. Thompson, Malisa Longo, Shillett Angel, Brett Halsey. 95 mins.

Director Fulci divides his time between behind-the-camera directing duties and acting chores for this hallucinogenic nightmare journey. Fulci portrays an exaggerated version of himself: Dr. Lucio Fulci, a famous horror-movie director who fears his brain is warping after years of filming celluloid terrors. When the nightmares and hallucinations become too overwhelming, he visits



Professor Egon Schwartz (Thompson), a deranged shrink who convinces Fulci to partake in clinical hypnosis. Soon, the nightmares prove to be all too convincing and people around the gore maestro begin dying for real. Fulci searches for the truth, determined to find the real killer or discover the killer inside his own mind. Gore moments include cadaver chainsawing, kid snuffing, decapitation, strangulation, microwave meltdown, noggin bashing, gut stabbing and, of course, a crazed kitty gnashing on Fulci's brain. This insane flick was released in a terrific double disc DVD in 2009 and now comes out in a lavish 3-disc Blu-ray set that includes a remastered HD version of the flick, a disc full of extras and the original soundtrack CD. The uncensored director's cut is accompanied by copious extras, including interviews with Fulci and the "sorta" star, Brett Halsey (who appears only in scenes taken from Fulci's *When Alice Broke the Looking Glass*, aka *Touch of Death*), trailers, still galleries, a plethora of new interviews including screenwriter Antonio Tentori, cinematographer Sandro Grossi, composer Fabio Frizzi and poster artist Enzo Sciotti, plus a snippet from Frizzi's 2015 North America tour, memories of Lucio, new liner notes, remembrances from daughter Antonella Fulci and much more. The first printing includes a glow-in-the-dark slipcase and mini portrait of our beloved maestro. For fans on the fence as to whether or not they should upgrade their DVDs, if you want every last tidbit of information on this flick, you will not find more than on this glorious release, produced with great affection and respect by the true exploitation archivists at Grindhouse Releasing. (To further fan your Fulci Fever, seek out Chas Balun's lovingly written 1996 fanboy tribute, *Lucio Fulci: Beyond the Gates*, published by Fantasma Books and still available via Amazon. ⸞