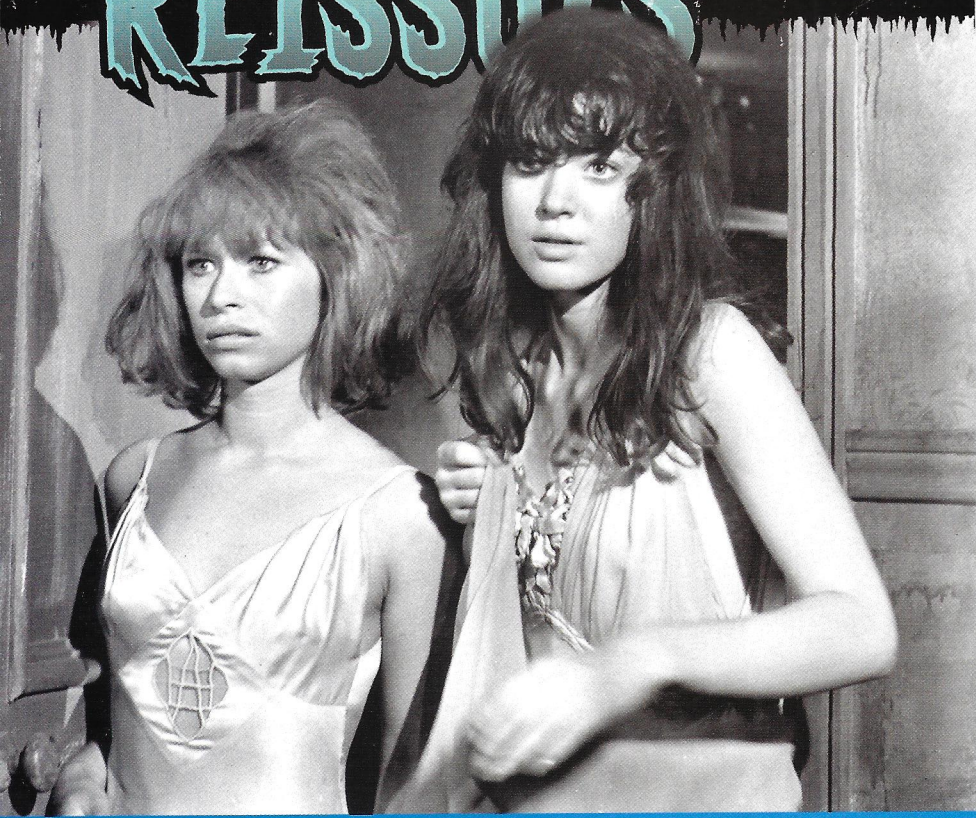


REISSUES



MURDEROUS MUNSTERS

SPIDER BABY (1967) Blu-ray

Starring Lon Chaney Jr., Carol Ohmart and Sid Haig
Written and directed by Jack Hill
Arrow Films

There aren't many movies in our beloved genre that defy categorization as much as *Spider Baby*. Also known as *The Maddest Story Ever Told*, it features one of the last screen appearances of Lon Chaney Jr. and was filled with creepy cannibalistic kids, scantily clad sirens and hilarious hijinks.

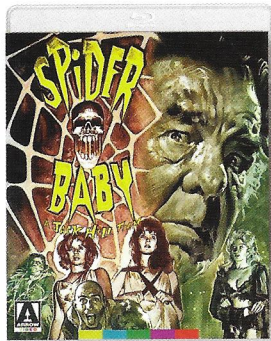
Right from the start, Jack Hill's black and white feature baffles viewers with opening credits featuring cartoon graphics and a quirky theme song sung by Chaney himself. Keeping with the whimsy, the first actor to appear on the screen is comedic legend Mantan Moreland (*King of the Zombies*). But soon enough the bodies begin to pile up and we watch with amazement as the film competently see-saws between humour and horror.

The story unfolds at a dilapidated house out in the country, where an old caretaker named

Bruno (Chaney Jr.) is looking after the last three descendants of a family that's been decimated by a strange disease that turns them into flesh-eating fiends. The fun begins when a group of distant relatives and a lawyer arrive to claim the family fortune, sell it and relocate the kids – who are played to perfection by Beverly Washburn (*Demon Haunt*), Sid Haig (*House of 1000 Corpses*) and Jill Banner, who starred in a handful of films before being killed by a drunk driver in 1982. Rape, murder and cannibalism ensue, making this a sort of cross

between *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *The Munsters*.

Although this Blu-ray presentation offers a number of previously available extras, such as an audio commentary with Jack Hill and Sid Haig, and the original trailer, this release also includes a dynamic panel discussion with some of the surviving cast, as well as Hill's 1960 UCLA student film *The Host*, starring Haig in his very first role. There are loads more goodies as well, including a collector's booklet and cover illustration by legendary artist Graham Humphreys.



Spider Baby's iconic cast, stark black and white imagery and eerie score may have helped cement its cult status, but its unique blend of comedy and the macabre still serve as a potent example of how to do dark humour right. Perhaps now, after all these years, it can finally claim its well-deserved title as the maddest story ever told.

LAST CHANCE LANCE

RUMBLE IN THE JUNGLE

CANNIBAL FEROX (1981) Blu-ray

Starring Lorraine De Selle Giovanni, Lombardo Radice and Danilo Mattei
Written and directed by Umberto Lenzi
Grindhouse Releasing

Hold on to your lunches, kids, because here comes the hi-def debut of one of the most nausea-inducing, mean-spirited movies ever made. *Cannibal Ferox* hits Blu-ray with a sleazy splash of viscera, so let's just jump into it.

Brother and sister team Rudy (Danilo Mattei) and Gloria (Lorraine De Solle), along with their friend Pat (Zora Kerova), make for the jungles of Paraguay to study and ultimately exonerate native tribes believed to be practicing cannibalism. Their path crosses that of shitbag drug smugglers Joe (Walter Lucchini) and Mike (Giovanni Lombardo Radice). Mike tells the trio that they have sustained an attack by cannibals, which is true, but Joe uses his last breaths to reveal the attack was well earned. In fact, Mike's cocaine-fuelled acts were so sadistic, all of the

travellers become targets by association. Sure enough, they're all caught, imprisoned and readied for a ritualistic payback. And folks, here's where things get really interesting. Without giving too much away, Mike and Pat suffer some of the most jaw-dropping punishments ever laid to celluloid. Let's just say that Rudy, who dies during a botched escape attempt, got off easy.

Once known in North America as *Make Them Die Slowly*, prolific Italian director Umberto Lenzi's 1981 movie stands near the top of the pile of chunk-blowers of the era. It's a hard watch, filled with the kind of nastiness other movies promise but seldom reach, checking items off the list of requisite cannibal go-tos with a twisted determination to out-gross all films that came before it. And who better than niche label Grindhouse Releasing (who first brought it to North America at the tail end of the VHS era) to offer up this splatter classic as a three-disc set? Not only does the film look better than ever, the extras are great too; they include deleted scenes, commentary, loads of interviews, a new feature-length documentary

