

FRIGHT-FILM FLASHBACKS!

ARROW VIDEO

(\$39.95 2-disc Blu-ray/DVD each) 7/15, 6/15
CONTAMINATION (1980) ♂♂♂

D: Luigi Cozzi. Ian McCulloch, Louise Marleau, Martin Mase, Samuel Rauch, Lisa Hahn. 95 mins.

An abandoned freighter whose cargo bay is filled with giant green alien eggs in boxes of coffee arrives in NYC and causes immediate havoc. Seems that anyone in close proximity to the moaning, breathing eggs explodes in stomach-churning slow motion. Col. Stella Holmes (Marleau) is dispatched to discover the deadly eggs' origin. Stella, NYC cop Tony Aris (Mase) and alcoholic ex-astronaut Ian Hubbard (McCulloch) track the eggs to a South American jungle. There they find the maniacal madman who brought the eggs to Earth, a plot for the aliens to take over the world and a giant Cyclops alien snot-monster who is pulling all the strings. Cozzi's (credited as Lewis Coates for U.S. audiences) love for science fiction keeps the proceedings moving at a fast clip. This is almost a live-action comic book, with shoot-outs and gory set-pieces every few minutes. The film is famous for its slow-motion chest-bursting scenes, which have the victims' insides gorily becoming their "outsides" in one glorious moment of crimson eruption. This was released theatrically through Cannon Films. McCulloch earned a cult following for appearing in this and two other Italian productions, Lucio Fulci's *Zombie* and Marino Girolami's *Dr. Butcher, MD*. Goblin provides the pulsating monster score. *Contamination* (aka *Alien Contamination*, *Alien 2*, *Toxic Spawn* and Cozzi's preferred moniker *Alien Arrives on Earth*) rates as a must for fans of horror/sci-fi drive-in flicks. Arrow's presentation looks beautiful.

—Rob Freese

SPIDER BABY (1964) ♂♂♂♂

D: Jack Hill. Lon Chaney Jr., Carol Ohmart, Quinn Redeker, Beverly Washburn, Jill Banner, Sid Haig, Mantan Moreland. 84 mins.

Weary family chauffeur Bruno (Chaney) sees after the health of the Merrye Family, residing in a secluded mansion. Siblings Elizabeth (Washburn), Virginia (Banner) and Ralph (Haig) all suffer from Merrye Syndrome, a degenerative illness which causes their brains to revert back to childhood and infancy as they grow older. One of the games Virginia loves to play is "Spider," in which she lures an unwitting victim into her web and "bites" them with her Ginsu "fangs." When distant relative Emily Howe (Ohmart) and her hus-

band Peter (Redeker) make a surprise visit, Bruno has his hands full trying to keep the "children" calm and Emily out of the basement, where an even darker, more deranged secret is kept. Known at various times as *Cannibal Orgy* and *The Liver Eaters*, *Spider Baby* or, *The Maddest Story Ever Told* is a complete delight. It's wickedly funny, wonderfully morbid and completely insane. The opening, with Moreland as a doomed delivery man, starts off creepy and humorous but quickly turns dark and gruesome. This is, without a doubt, Chaney Jr.'s last great film, and we feel horrible for him as he tries to keep the family together. Washburn and Banner are fantastic, playing innocents who can turn deadly in a blink of a wide eye. Ohmart is ideal as the greedy villainess, while Redeker finds a perfect balance between being a goofy good guy and a victim of the girls' games. Haig cemented his future as a Grade A character actor with his turn as infantile Ralph. Ronald Stein supplies the exquisite scare soundtrack, while Chaney sings the delightful, if mildly demented, opening credits ditty. Easily one of Hill's best, displaying his high-concept weirdness and anything-goes style. In addition to the extras included on the previous Dark Sky Films special edition DVD, Arrow also includes *The Host*, Hill's 30-minute short featuring Haig in his first collaboration with his friend.

—Rob Freese

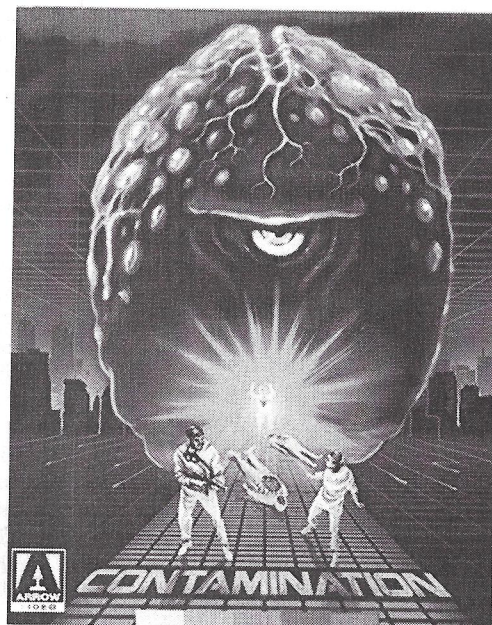
KINO LORBER

(\$29.95 Blu-ray) 7/15

DERANGED (1974) ♂♂♂1/2

D: Jeff Gillen and Alan Ormsby. Roberts Blossom, Cosette Lee, Leslie Carlson, Micki Moore, Pat Orr, Marion Waldman. 82 mins.

Inspired, like the same year's more celebrated cult winner *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (VS #80) and the 1960 Hitchcock classic *Psycho*, by killer/cannibal Ed Gein's actual exploits, *Deranged* manages to be, by turns, gross, scary and blackly funny. Under the supervision of auteurs Ormsby and Gillen, *Deranged* opens with backward, unsocialized Ezra (Blossom) tending to his dying mom (Lee), whose last words are a warning re the wiles of wicked women—all women, in fact, save for one Maureen Selby: "Maureen's the only woman I ever did trust. She's fat, that's why." Mater's death leaves Ez so lonely that, after a year, he decides to exhume and "repair" her (!), using flesh sheared from fresh cadavers. When Ezra finally meets the aforementioned Maureen (Waldman), a sex-starved widow, the only way he can save himself from imminent seduction is by shooting her, thus launching his entry into the world of big-time crime and psychosis. As Ezra, Blossom is nothing short of brilliant, lending considerable idiosyncratic shading to what could easily have been a one-dimensional role, and he receives ample support from a cast of unknowns. The film's simple but effective framing device features an omniscient reporter (Carlson) who pops in and out of the action with updates on Ezra's career. Kino's new Blu-ray edition includes separate audio commen-



taries by writer/co-director Ormsby and film historian Richard Harland Smith, an interview with producer Tom Karr, and the original theatrical trailer. No relation to Chuck Vincent's 1987 dementia-driven hallucinatory horror of the same name (Republic Pictures VHS, n.i.d.), starring erstwhile porn starlet Veronica Hart under her real handle Jane Hamilton. For more maternal madness, scope out Patrick Rand's 1991 lycanthropic family fable *Mom*, starring Jeanne Bates, Brion James and Stella Stevens, making its DVD debut as an entry in the MGM Limited Edition Collection line.

ZONE TROOPERS (1985) ♂♂1/2

D: Danny Bilson. Timothy Van Patten, Tim Thomerson, Biff Manard, Art LaFleur, William Paulson, Peter Boom. 86 mins.

Zone Troopers offers a fairly fresh twist on your traditional E.T. tale by integrating an alien-landing motif into an otherwise conventional World War II flick. While the pic exhibits more range and imagination than most of Charles Band's prolific Empire Pictures output of the period, *Zone* too often drifts into blatant imitation tarted up as homage. The dialogue, by director Bilson and co-screenwriter Paul De Meo, covers the complete catalogue of backdate combat clichés, lifted from the likes of Sam Fuller's *The Steel Helmet* and Lewis Milestone's *A Walk in the Sun*. Vets Thomerson, Manard and LaFleur, along with future *The Sopranos* director Van Patten as the young GI sci-fi fan who first befriends the aliens, emote effectively in roles that, decades earlier, would have been handled by Gene Evans, Keenan Wynn, Harvey Lembeck and Marshall Thompson. While *Zone*'s modest virtues are often sabotaged by the pic's parasitic tendencies, the film is still worth watching for its colorful comic-book palette. Extras include a screenwriters' commentary, featurette, and original trailer. ♂

—The Phantom