

DO YOU REMEMBER HALLOWEEN?

HELLIONS

Starring Chloe Rose, Robert Patrick and Rossif Sutherland
Directed by Bruce McDonald
Written by Pascal Trottier
IFC Midnight

Considering the love many fright fans have for 2008's *Pontypool*, it was jarring to see the hate heaped upon *Hellions*, Canadian director Bruce McDonald's second horror film, after its theatrical release last September. Admittedly the Halloween-set film does not have the same big brain as the Tony Burgess-written *Pontypool*, but it does benefit from McDonald's ability and willingness to twist genre clichés, whether it be rock movies (*Hard Core Logo*), domestic dramas (*The Husband*) or horror.

Hellions stars Chloe Rose as Dora Vogel, a small-town teen who finds out that she's pregnant on Halloween. Alone at home, the girl is besieged by creepy masked kids who favourably bring to mind Sam from *Trick-'r-Treat* (2007). Their pleas for sweets turn sour, however, when they bring Dora her boyfriend's head in a sack. It soon becomes apparent that Dora, whose pregnancy is accelerating rapidly, is not the object of the hellions' desire: it is her baby they want.

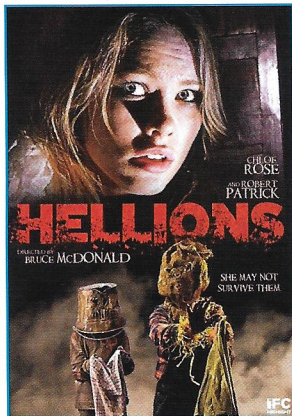
Looked at unsympathetically, *Hellions* is, admittedly, messy. There are plot holes, bad character decisions (like Robert Patrick's cop character telling Chloe to stay put while he investigates attic noises) and exposition that inadequately explains the hellions' nature and purpose. Those looking for solid answers will not find them.

Hellions' strength instead comes from McDonald's – and his collaborators cinematographer Norayr Kasper and editor Duff Smith's – ability to tap into the imagery and pacing of nightmares. Together they create a weird world that stays with you long after the film's 82-minute running time ends.

Credit much of that power to McDonald's decision to shoot day-for-night using infrared. While partly motivated by practicality (McDonald hoped to avoid the discomfort of shooting at night in November in Ontario – brrr!), the aesthetic, deployed when the hellions first attack, heightens the film's surreal nature. That weirdness also gives full license to Kasper to compose beautiful shots that come off like twisted takes on Maxfield Parrish paintings.

Hellions won't please all (or even most) horror fans, but consider McDonald's return to horror far more of a treat than a trick.

SEAN PLUMMER



OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE CRASHES THE HOUSING MARKET

THE DEVIL IN MISS ANGEL



THE LAST HOUSE

Wild Eye Releasing

I was wondering why actress Joanna Angel is pictured twice on the cover of this DVD but not her name. A peek at the IMDb made it clear: the producers wanted to cash in on her looks and not the fact that she starred in *Fuckenstein*, *Dog of the Dead*, *The XXXorcist* and, personal favourite, *Rock & Roll in My Butthole 2*. In *The Last House*, things get really weird for Candy (Angel) and her escort entourage when they're paid to attend a party in a mansion by three satanic weirdos who intend to kill the girls for their perverse pleasure. Not even cameos by Jason Mewes (*Clerks*) and Felissa Rose (*Sleepaway Camp*) can save this movie, which should be your last choice for entertainment, Angelic or otherwise.

BODY COUNT: 7

BEST DEATH: Bat to the head in the bathtub

ELEANOR'S ESCAPE ROOM



SLASHER HOUSE

Chemical Burn Entertainment

Waking up naked in a jail cell is a bad way to start your day. But finding out that you're locked up in an abandoned prison with a bunch of sadistic serial killers, one of whom is a truly terrifying clown is even worse! Our protagonist in this British flick, played by the stunning Eleanor James (*Forest of the Damned*), must fight all these sickos and psychos if she wants her freedom. Though pedantic at times, the film's colour palette is rather unique, as it jacks up the lush reds (including a copious amount of blood) and sickly greens of the prison's septic interior. *Slasher House* is a fun watch that skillfully hides its low budget with some technical polish, a strong script and lots of the red stuff!

BODY COUNT: 13

BEST DEATH: Electric drill to the head

GARY GIVES HEAD



MANSION OF BLOOD

MVD Visual

At least once a year I come across a movie so awful it makes me want to gouge out my eyes. And although 2016 has just begun, *Mansion of Blood* is a top contender. Set in a renovated 1920s mansion, it stars a plethora of B-list actors who attend a party during a lunar eclipse, only to be killed off in increasingly bizarre situations. To say it tries too hard is a massive understatement, as it features a Mayan curse, witches, ghosts, phantom horses, magic spells, zombies, demonic possessions, a mummy, a werewolf, a vampire, a horde of murderous little people and the disembodied, randomly appearing head of Gary Busey! Clocking in at an agonizing 99 minutes, it's destined to become your favourite drink coaster.

BODY COUNT: 32

BEST DEATH: Mauled by little people

LAST CHANCE LANCE