

HOME SICKNESS

HOME INVASION (2015) ♂♂

D: David Tennant. Natasha Henstridge, Jason Patric, Scott Adkins, Liam Dickinson, Kyra Zagorsky, Michael Rogers. 88 mins. (Sony Pictures) 2/16

Twenty years and at least as many pounds after playing svelte, sultry alien seductress Sil in Roger Donaldson's sci-fi exploitation exercise *Species* (VS #18), a somewhat shockingly untuned-looking Henstridge (still only 41) stars as Chloe, a rich dude's neglected spouse forced to protect herself and her bratty young son Jacob (Dickinson) from a quartet of killers out (or more accurately in) to plunder her opulent mansion in this generically titled Canadian DTV **Panic Room** variation. A raging storm, washed-out bridge, power outage and gridlocked traffic conveniently combine to prevent help from arriving, so Chloe must rely on the long-distance instructions offered by home-security system monitor Mike (Patric, himself a long way from his young-studly *The Lost Boys* days). Most of the runtime involves Chloe and son darting about the house with the black-leather-clad femme fatale of the group (Zagorsky) in heavily armed pursuit. Exterior cutaways follow the halting progress of local law enforcers as they seek to find their way to the pair's remote lair. Flat dialogue and flavorless thesping add to the general tedium, though director Tennant and scripter Peter Sullivan try to lift home-viewers' drooping eyelids by pumping up the body count as the bad guys and girl brutally eliminate all who would stand in their way. The only inspired exchange occurs when one of the invaders—upon being told by a doomed bridge operator "I've got kids at home and a cat"—informs his victim that "cats can take care of themselves" before popping him. Otherwise, few surprises penetrate this passively watchable but uninspired time-killer. Home-invasion thriller fans would be better off catching the original *The Purge*, the undeservedly obscure *The Aggression Scale* (VS #84) or the intense Euro import *Angst* (Cult Epics), to cite but three relatively recent examples.

—*The Phantom*

THE HOUSE ACROSS THE STREET (2014) ♂♂♂

D: Arthur Luhn. Jessica Sonneborn, Eric Roberts, Alex Rocco, Ethan Embry, Josh Hammonds, Courtney Gains, Michael Malvesti. 93 mins. (Level 33 Entertainment) 5/16

One of the great American myths is that small towns are hospitable communities full of friendly people. Many screenwriters assert that this outward warmth conceals scary attitudes and sinister activities. Kansas transplant Amy (Sonneborn) might echo such sentiments because her attempt to start anew in a small Eastern locale quickly sours. Old Mr. Barnes (Rocco) may be the amiable next-door neighbor, but his rental house across the street becomes a frightening property. The local police force appears to protect and serve certain suspect interests, as Amy discovers through her unpleasant encounters with ranking patrol officer Peterson (Roberts). She is forced to sort things out, despite being repeatedly warned not to interfere. Sonneborn gives a flat, determined performance that may be a reflection of Amy's true nature. Rocco's frailty may scare boomers, even those who are unaware that he died last year. Roberts' creepy officiousness is effectively pitted against Sonneborn's defensive cynicism. These attitudes are incorporated into Luhn's script, tapping into viewers' suspicions of society and its police. You do not have to be a cynic to enjoy this DVD, but it helps.

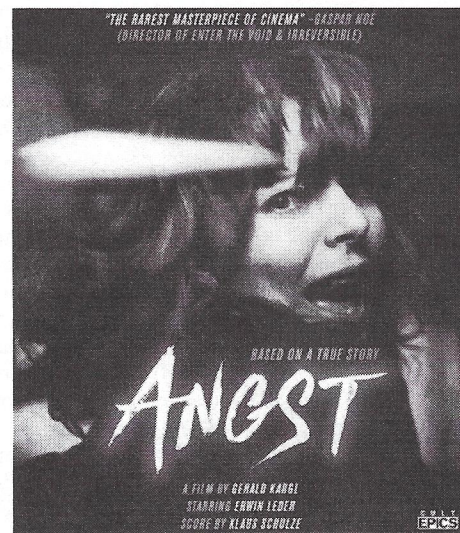
—Ronald Charles Epstein

THE LAST HOUSE (2015) ♂

D: Sean Cain. Ezra Buzzington, Jason Mewes, Lauren Walsh, Ricardo Gray, Monique Parent, Jack Forcinito, Timothy Muskatell. 89 mins. (Wild Eye Releasing) 11/15

Prostitution may be the oldest profession, but the retirement plan is lousy. Ask "Love" (Walsh), an L.A. hooker who wants a different life with her boyfriend Ned (Mewes) and a new job. Unfortunately, her pimp Sonny (Forcinito) wants her to work a Malibu party for three presumably wealthy clients (Buzzington, Gray, Parent) who turn out to be dangerous deviates. This story contains supernatural revenge fantasy elements, which the director calls "Ghostworld" on his commentary track. That aspect is not clarified in the film itself. He also describes writer Wes Laurie's script as "nonlinear"—viewers may dismiss it as nonsensical. Buzzington steals the picture as chief villain "Hate." He plays him as a transplanted decadent Southern gentleman with the expensive clothes and physique of the upscale Southern Californian. His genuinely creepy performance lets the viewers forget that he is a road-show Tommy Lee Jones. Mewes, as the successful entrepreneur who falls in love with a hired hooker, becomes the erotic equivalent of Remington Products CEO/spokesman Victor Kiam. His Ned is the satisfied customer who bought the company! It is an interesting commentary on the film and Los Angeles society that the most lovable human character is Poot (Muskatell), Sonny's stoner driver. You only watch this film when your friend invites you to a rec room screening. Don't tell anyone that the mansion looks familiar because it has been used in a number of adult-film shoots.

—Ronald Charles Epstein



FROM AUSTRIA WITH ANGST

ANGST (1983) ♂♂♂1/2

D: Gerald Kargl. Erwin Leder, Silvia Rabenreither, Edith Rosset, Rudolf Gotz, Robert Hunger-Buhler. 87 mins. (Cult Epics) 9/15

Before *Henry*, there was *Angst*, an equally harrowing portrait of a serial killer that pulls few punches in its depiction of an at-times almost calmly twisted mind and the brutal, arbitrary destruction it wreaks. Based on the exploits of real-life murderer Werner Kniesek, the film stars Leder as an introverted maniac newly released from a 10-year prison stretch who roams the Vienna suburbs in search of victims to fulfill a ghastly scenario. He finds an unguarded house occupied by an older woman (Rosset) and her two grown offspring, a daughter (Rabenreither) and a mentally and physically disabled son (Gotz) confined to a wheelchair (shades of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*). For most of the movie's running time, Leder systematically chases, binds and tortures the trio while clinically reciting his own traumatic history of abuse in a dispassionate voice-over at emotionless odds with the obvious excitement he displays onscreen while carrying out his vile misdeeds. The viewing experience is made that much more grueling, raw and relentlessly by Oscar-winning cinematographer, music-video director and co-screenwriter (with helmer Kargl) Zbigniew Rybczynski's in-your-face photography, frequently shot from Leder's merciless POV. Tangerine Dream's Klaus (Manhunter) Schulze provides a strong synth score that further intensifies the action. Cult Epics presents *Angst* uncut in a new HD transfer. Extras include an introduction by major fan and filmmaker Gaspar (*Irreversible*) Noe, an interview with director Kargl by notorious Teutonic auteur Jorg (*Nekromantik*) Buttgerit, a Q&A with cinematographer Rybczynski, a Kargl commentary conducted by film critic Marcus Stiglegger, and a 40-page booklet illustrated with rare photos and packed with articles, cast and crew interviews. Like John McNaughton's *Henry*, *Angst* is a film that's often tough to take but impossible to forget.

—*The Phantom*