

film - which tells the story of troubled Faith (Naomi Battrick) who, after discovering that her father has terminal cancer, turns to Sissy (Anna Walton) her school's games mistress for help, with diabolical and devastating results - manages to raise fewer chills than an episode of TV's *Charmed*.

The main problem with *Cherry Tree* - and one it shares with an increasing amount of modern horror cinema - is the mistaken belief that, in order to scare audiences, you have to throw everything at them, often including the kitchen sink. In the past horror films - such as Hammer's classic *The Witches* featuring the marvellously fragile Joan Fontaine, which combined *Cherry Tree*'s subjects of education and the occult to much better effect - worked because they, in fact, showed very little. With Keating and McCarthy's brand of emerald tinted schlock however, everything is displayed in full blooded, gory glory.

Which is a shame. The subject of cancer - which many people will have had experience of in some way - and the terrible lengths it pushes Faith to in order to save her beloved father from the ghastly disease, could have made for a genuinely disturbing and edgy thriller with sinister, devilish overtones. The film's production values and performances from it's two female leads are also top notch. The isolated house - beneath which much of the story's devilry takes place - is marvellously atmospheric and creepy: a gloomy spiral staircase twists below the basement of the house leading to a veritable maze of candlelit subterranean caverns where the inevitable climatic showdown takes place. Battrick and Walton, as the primary adversaries, both turn in strong and richly nuanced performances, with Walton particularly unsettling as the evil, sneering Sissy who's price for helping Faith and her father would make even the most devoted of daughters think twice.

Ultimately however a lack of subtly where it's no holds barred viscerals are concerned, means that - if you dig beneath its polished surface and devilish mumbo-jumbo - there is very little of real charm about this tale of ancient magic from the Emerald Isle.

Rating: 🧟🧟🧟🧟

SPECIAL FEATURES: None

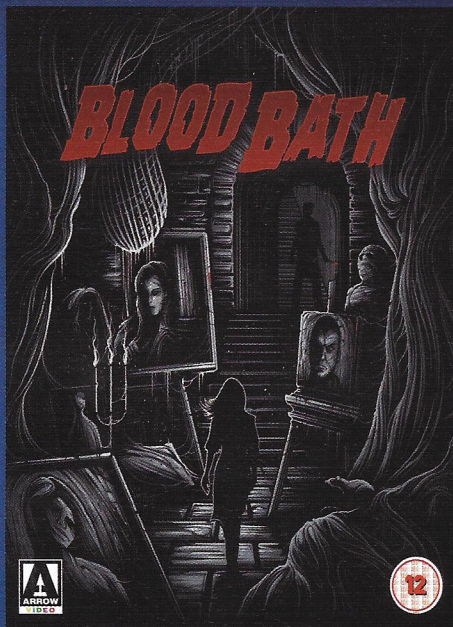
Cherry Tree is out now on UK DVD courtesy of Studiocanal

REVIEWED BY CLEAVER PATTERSON

BLOOD BATH

THE FILM:

Overlook the fact that - despite some occasional, surprisingly violent, interludes



- *Blood Bath* and its variations are rather pedestrian, and you will be treated to some wonderfully atmospheric and genuinely creepy cinema.

A deranged artist (William Campbell), believing he's the re-embodiment of a mythical, local vampire, lures a bevy of young beauties to his studio, where he preserves their loveliness forever beneath a layer of wax.

As mentioned in the extras which accompany Arrow's release of these cinematic oddities, those behind the films were clearly influenced by the Orson Welles school of filmmaking. Made in black and white, the films were shot in and around the Serbian town of Belgrade - when it was still heralded as one of eastern Europe's top resort destinations during the mid 1960s. Outdoor scenes, placed in deserted alleyways and piazzas and filmed at unexpected, irregular angles, are reminiscent of such Wellesian classics as *The Third Man*, even down to that said masterpiece's central character, Harry Lime, bearing more than a passing resemblance to *Blood Bath*'s vampire figure who terrorises the town.

Legend goes that Roger Corman - though heavily involved behind-the-scenes - had very little to do with *Blood Bath*'s day-to-day production, and didn't think much of the initial finished film which in the end resembled a surreal crime caper and was released with various tweaks, under two titles, *Operation Titian* and *Portrait in Terror*. Corman had wanted a more commercial horror film and, with extra scenes - like a Dali inspired dream sequence - filmed later in California, another two films, *Blood Bath* and *Track of the Vampire*, were also produced.

Truth is that you can get bogged down in the minute variations of the various films, all

of which are gone into in fascinating detail on the discs's extras. Instead, if you don't take them seriously, and watch the two pairs separately, enjoying *Operation Titian* and *Portrait in Terror*, and *Blood Bath* and *Track of the Vampire* as clever variations of each other, complete with borrowed footage shared between them, you will doubtless find them entertaining, a unique, if slightly camp, slice of surreal horror cinema.

Rating: 🧟🧟🧟🧟

SPECIAL FEATURES:

As usual with a release from Arrow the extras included are as interesting, if not more so, than the films themselves: these guys really could teach other mainstream distributors a lesson or two in providing the public with their money's worth.

High definition Blu-ray editions of the four films, 2K restorations of *Portrait in Terror*, *Blood Bath* and *Track of the Vampire* and a reconstruction of *Operation Titian* from original film materials and standard definition inserts, provide everything the completest could conceivably want. These are accompanied by regular Arrow features including a stills gallery, poster and reversible sleeve art as well as a booklet of new writing on *Blood Bath*.

It's the other extras however which make this particular release a worthy addition to your collection. Interviews with producer-director Jack Hill, and horror icon and *Blood Bath* actor Sid Haig, provide fascinating firsthand reminiscences about the film's production. But it's the extended 'visual essay' by Tim Lucas - founder and editor of genre bible *Video Watchdog* - which stands out. What Lucas doesn't know about obscure horror cinema probably isn't worth knowing, and his insight into the protracted and frequently troubled production of *Blood Bath* and it's offshoots, adds colour and life to the films themselves.

Rating: 🧟🧟🧟🧟

Blood Bath is out now on UK Blu-ray courtesy of Arrow Video.

REVIEWED BY CLEAVER PATTERSON

CLASSROOM 6

THE FILM:

You have to ask how some films progress beyond initial pitch, let alone find the backing to make it to a finished production. *Classroom 6* - the 2015 found footage shocker (and that term is used in its loosest sense), from Brazilian director / writer Jonas Odenheimer - is a case in point.

A rookie TV reporter (Valentina Kolaric) persuades her boss to let her and some colleagues spend the night in a reputedly

haunted classroom at a local high school, in order to investigate the alleged disappearance of a lecturer and one of his students.

The fact this film is set in a high school is appropriate, as everything about it smacks of an end of term project, cobbled together by some film studies students in the hope of getting the grades to progress to year two. Save for a few establishing scenes shot elsewhere, the whole action takes place within a couple of school corridors and a classroom: perhaps Odenheimer and his team wanted to create a sense of oppressive confinement, but somehow I think that gives them too much credit. Instead it was clearly a ruse to cut costs, as the whole production looks like it was shot with no budget at all. As for shocks, the only jolt I got was when the end credits made me jump and I realised that I'd nodded off. If the film does nothing else it will hopefully serve to put the tired and overused found footage format to bed once and for all.

I was tempted to give Classroom 6 two stars out of sympathy. However, as I couldn't justify giving the extras on the disc three stars - which I would have had to as they are marginally more interesting than the actual film - I've had to go with one star. Watching it, many may say even that is being over generous.

Rating: 🧟🧟🧟🧟

SPECIAL FEATURES:

If there's anything in Classroom 6's favour it's that those involved in its production clearly had fun making it, as can be seen in two of the extras included on the disc. A short film consisting of behind-the-scenes footage shot during the making of

the feature, not only gives a surprisingly interesting insight into the filmmaking process, but also highlights the obvious fun and lighthearted interludes the team experienced during the process. The other extra which highlights this is an interview with Valentina Kolaric, who takes the role of the film's lead female. An accomplished actress, clearly worth more than amateur productions like Classroom 6, Kolaric gives some remarkably candid insights into the lengths Odenheimer and his team went to in order to get an authentic performance from her - situations a lesser actress may have balked at.

Couple these titbits with the film's trailer which, as is often the case, proves more fun than the film itself, an alternate ending that would have neither added nor detracted from the final film as we see it, and a short (and far superior) film from 2012 by Odenheimer called The Interview, and the extras prove the only things that warrant you spending your time or money with this release.

Rating: 🧟🧟🧟🧟

Classroom 6 is out now on UK DVD courtesy of Left Films.

REVIEWED BY CLEAVER PATTERSON

CONSUMPTION

THE FILM:

Four friends take a retreat in the ever so snowy but quite beautiful mountains. All is not as it seems, as even from the off set, everything is a little bit weird and out of place. There is no real hi jinx or enthusiasm for a weekend break, as one might expect but also, as our young friends make their journey by car, factions could be seen and felt amongst the group.

Seth (David Lautman) who already looks half dead, tells a ghost story which does set the tone nicely that paves the way for misfortune and misadventure. When they arrive they meet the odd couple from hell and they interrogate the two girls Becca (Sarah Greyson) and Mallory (Arielle Brachfield) over their belief in god.

With snowy isolation, Seth being strangely overly protective over his suitcase and Eric (Chris Dorman) continuing with his drinking, the vacation is not going to be a good one and neither was the film.

Released by Wildeye and under a new title 'Consumption' (formerly known as Live-In-Fear) this first time feature from Brandon Scullion, doesn't offer much in the way of fear or scares. In the first half of the film, the storyline was quite confusing and I had no real understanding of where it was going or indeed what was going on.



We then had some odd intermission moment, which did break up the film but it lasted way too long. It was like this swirl of psychedelic colours that added no real purpose to the film. Truth be told, I thought it was the end of the film, which did offer some relief because my head was mushed. Fortunately, I skipped past and realised it was just some mad Scooby Doo moment.

The issue that I have with Consumption, is not that it is low budget or indeed that the actors looked bored, it was the music and the practical effects. It stands to reason that if someone has a hand chopped off, it makes sense that it is noticeably shorter in length than the other. The other thing that grated was some of the musical accompaniments, which included plucking of a guitar one string at a time.

I did like the storyline to a point but I feel that the execution was all wrong and that the actors were not feeling it quite as they should be. There was even an appearance from film veteran Maria Olsen and like the others, she was there in character but there was no substance to her role.

Rating: 🧟🧟🧟🧟

SPECIAL FEATURES:

There's a rather nice Behind the Scenes Featurette on the disc along with an audio commentary from the films director. It's these kind of extras that finish off a disc rather nicely. There's a trailer for the film too.

Rating: 🧟🧟🧟🧟

Consumption is released on US DVD on July 26th courtesy of Wildeye Releasing.

REVIEWED BY AMANDA HUNT

