

# The Phantom of the Movies'

## NEW RELEASE SHELF

*New release titles are followed by year, Phantom rating, director, lead actors, running time (with titles released in separate editions, the running time refers to the Unrated version), DVD and/or Blu-ray label and release date (month and year).*

### RATINGS KEY

⌘⌘⌘⌘

Couldn't be better

⌘⌘⌘1/2

Excellent

⌘⌘⌘

Good

⌘⌘1/2

Not bad; worth watching

⌘⌘

Mediocre, worthwhile for a particular thesp, director or genre

⌘1/2

Poor but may have points of interest

⌘

Just plain bad

1/2⌘

Even worse than that

0⌘

The pits

N/A

Not available on video

N.I.D.

Not in distribution

Special thanks go to Guidance Ro-Man for his ratings symbol suggestion.



### VIDEO VERITE

#### CHILDREN OF THE STARS (2012)

⌘⌘⌘

D: Bill Perrine. Diana Tumminia, William Proctor, Dan Smith. 78 mins. (Billingsgate Media/MVD Visual) 3/16

If the Platonic Ideal of UFO cults exists, surely it must be the Unarians, who combine extraterrestrial brotherhood with past-life regressions, archangels, and the salvation of Satan himself. This documentary takes us through their founding by Ernest and Ruth Norman, to the apotheosis of Ruth, after Ernest's death, when she announced herself to be the transdimensional archangel Uriel, and on to the present day. The oral history is accompanied by snippets of public domain SF movies, tours through the Unarian center, archival footage, and clips of Unarian-produced movies (which are a sight to be

hold). For the most part, Perrine lets the Unarians tell their story themselves, with occasional contributions from sociologist Diana Tumminia. The tale that unfolds is, of course, completely bizarre, but the Unarians are so earnest and so well-meaning that it is almost impossible not to feel charmed even while one's jaw is hanging open. I would have liked to hear more from Tumminia. What she has to say is informative and helpful, and it would have been nice to dig a little deeper into what makes the group tick. (What, for instance, could be said about the fact that the active members appear to be overwhelmingly white and middle-aged?) Still, such a wish comes rather close to wanting the film to do something different than its manifest project, and there's plenty to observe and chew on here in the material that Perrine presents without comment. A most entertaining documentary, then, filled with some truly astonishing imagery and the exposition of even more astonishing beliefs.

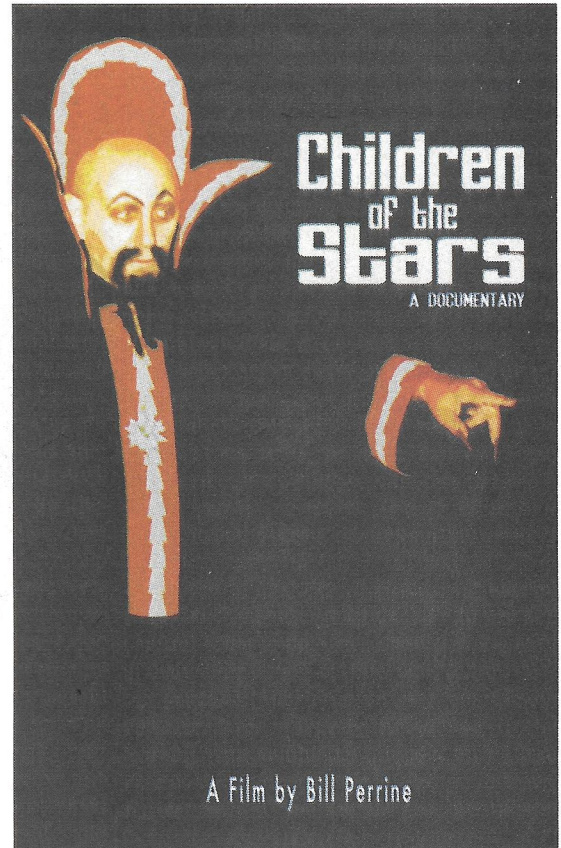
—David Annandale

#### CINEMA'S EXILES: FROM HITLER TO HOLLYWOOD

(2009)⌘⌘⌘1/2

D: Karen Thomas. 117 mins. (Warner Archive) 4/16

Recently aired on TCM, where programmers used the occasion to stage a mini film festival featuring the efforts of several of the prominent emigre actors and auteurs profiled in the documentary, *Cinema's Exiles* chronicles the mass creative exodus prompted by the Nazis' rise to power in 1930s Germany. Over the course of a few short years, such soon-to-be essential American film industry mainstays as directors Fritz (*Manhunt*) Lang, Billy (*Sunset Boulevard*) Wilder and Fred (*High Noon*) Zinnemann, performers Peter (*The Maltese Falcon*) Lorre and Marlene (*Touch of Evil*) Dietrich, writer-director Curt (*The Wolf Man*) Siodmak, and composers Hans J. (*Son of Dracula*) Salter and Franz (*Rear Window*) Waxman, among many others (over 800 in all), left their homeland to set up shop in, and profoundly alter the landscape of, a largely welcoming Hollywood. Filmmaker Thomas weaves film clips, archival footage, home movies and interviews to form a fascinating tapestry tracing one



film culture's acclimation to and influence on an already established cinematic scene. To her credit, Thomas not only celebrates the oft-cited success stories experienced by the above luminaries but details the fates of many of the emigres who failed to make a smooth transition and ultimately fell by the wayside. She also presents cogent personal portraits of the artists under review, offering tales of Lang's alienating dictatorial directorial style, scripster Wilder's embrace of an adoptive language at which he would soon excel, and Dietrich's wavering loyalty between Hollywood and her native Germany, which she would often revisit after war's end. Anecdotes of struggle, joy and tragedy intertwine, but *Cinema's Exiles* ultimately emerges as an upbeat account dramatizing how the Third Reich's loss became America's lasting gain. Sigourney Weaver smoothly handles narration chores, providing listeners with a respite from the normally ubiquitous Peter Coyote. Withal, *Cinema's Exiles* reps essential viewing for couchside celluloid scholars.

—The Phantom