



THE GORE MET

MENU: A DISTASTEFUL DISH AND SOME SEASONAL FARE

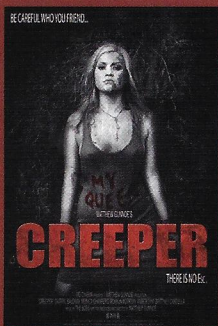


Online harassment of women is a pernicious and serious issue. While perhaps simplifying things, women are essentially harassed for one of two perceptions: that they're a challenge to male dominance or that their sexuality is a commodity to be possessed.

The Gamergate fiasco last year is an egregious example of the former. Prominent women critical of the misogyny inherent in video games and the industry were subjected to an anonymous and coordinated campaign to silence them through threats of rape and murder.

Similarly, "creeping" is a term that describes cyber-stalking women through their social media activity. Matthew Gunnoe chose to address this in his 2012 film *Creeper*, released last month on DVD by Unearthed Films. In it, Erica (Monica Chambers) and Cally (Rohnja Morrow) are tired of being harassed on a platform called ConnectMeNet and plot with three like-minded friends to draw out a creeper and humiliate him online. They target Jerry (Darryl Baldwin), a mute Iraqi war vet rendered child-like by anti-psychotic medication, and regularly gather 'round the laptop to put him through a series of increasingly humiliating tasks, rewarding him with flashes of breasts and promises of sexual possibilities. Erica and Cally get so caught up in the thrill of dominating Jerry that they decide to kill him, but their attempt goes awry and he vanishes. A year later, in the throes of psychosis, he returns for revenge.

Despite the female-heavy cast, *Creeper* won't win any feminist awards; the women are depicted as vain, self-absorbed and ceaselessly cruel. In other words, they're bitches who deserve to die. But that's not the only problematic aspect of *Creeper*. Smart phones and laptops do not mix with the faux film damage and blown-out '70s colour palette in the first half of the film, and the CGI enhancements to the practical gore effects in the second half will alienate seasoned gorehounds. So, as a throwback to cheap '70s exploitation, *Creeper* delivers the boobs and blood (and a notable score). As a vehicle to subvert



Volumes of Blood

the hackneyed depiction of women in horror films though, it's a missed opportunity.

So let's move on to something more fun that arrives just in time for Halloween, the resoundingly fun season-themed anthology, *Volumes of Blood*. For it, five directors each contributed a short, all shot within the confines of the same public library!

The film opens with a direct homage to *Friday the 13th*, which is revealed to be a film that a psychology student is watching on his phone during a lecture on urban legends. The class is given an assignment to come up with urban legends of their own, so four friends meet in the library on All Hallow's Eve to tell each other their stories...

Prolific author John Kenneth Muir (*Terror Television*) makes his directing debut with *A Little Pick Me Up*, an EC Comics-type shocker about a bedraggled student and a mysterious salesman with a new energy drink guaranteed to blow your head off. It's short and righteously gory!

Then there's *Ghastly*, P.J. Starks' Japanese-style ghost story featuring a librarian working after hours and a book on ghosts that refuses to stay shelved.

EC Comics resonates again in Jakob Bilinski's *13 After Midnight*. In it, a girl puts off going to her bourbon-swilling boyfriend's Halloween party to finish an assignment in the library, only to find herself locked inside with a horrible beast.

The longest of the bunch is Thomas Milliner's deadly serious *Encyclopedia Satanica*, in which a librarian who is guilt-ridden after her ex-boyfriend's suicide finds an old book of arcane spells and rituals among the returns. If the book is kissed and the name of a deceased loved one spoken, that person will return from the grave. Before you can say "The Monkey's Paw", the disgruntled beau appears, but he's not looking for love.

And finally, the glue that binds the film — and provides the final twist, is Lee Vervoort's *That's a Wrap*. Producer and writing contributor P.J. Starks steps in front of the camera to play an egomaniacal director on the set of a horror film plagued by several masked killers.

Volumes of Blood is a perfect example of a film where dedication to craft trumps budgetary constraints. Sure, almost the entire film was shot and set in one location, but it looks fantastic and moves along at a crisp pace. There's a variety of tones in the stories and, while each filmmaker took an individual approach to his segment, there's a remarkable consistency to the whole. And there are exploding heads, and spurting arteries, and oozing intestines and chainsaw mayhem!

Volumes of Blood will hit DVD next year and is currently playing festivals, so catch it if you can! It's just the right treat in the horror movie Halloween bag to make up for the cinematic poison apples. 🍎

