



# THE GORE-MET

MENU: BINGEING AND PURGING



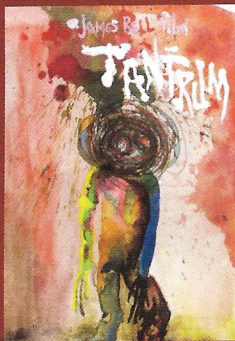
**S**ome staggering numbers – this is the sixteenth anniversary of this column and the 150th issue it's appeared in. I have been The Gore-met for a third of my life now. In that time, I have seen much change...

My first few columns were about prized ex-rental VHS tapes I'd scored in bargain bins and mom-and-pop video store closings. The new releases I wrote about were VHS screeners I had to pick up from the *Rue Morgue* office. I didn't get a DVD player until late 2003; I wasn't convinced it was going to take off as a home video format. However, few tapes were being sent in and I was running out of material.

Nowadays, I don't deal much with physical media. A lot of the screeners I see are private uploads to video file-sharing services by filmmakers I've contacted through one of the many Facebook groups for horror fans. Other times, I'll sneak a peek at stuff a budding director makes available to group members to watch for free. That's how I saw James Bell's short film *Tantrum* (2015). Bell is something of an underground *cause célèbre* due to his earlier shorts *Dogdick* (2013) and *Manuer* (2014). I was in.

*Tantrum* is a welcome throw-back to the transgressive movies of the '80s and '90s. That was a time when underground films were actually shot on film and comparatively costly and difficult to make. Anyone who wanted to make a surreal cinematic shocker had to have the talent, imagination and balls necessary to attract investors, distributors and audiences. Think *Eraserhead* (1977), *Combat Shock* (1984) or *Schramm* (1993).

The singular type of unnerving aesthetic in flicks like those resonates in Bell's brand of cinematic delirium. A man (Bell) puts a bullet in his brain after opening a vein and pulling a bit of gristle out of his wrist. He enters a Purgatory in which he's subservient to a spastic, wheelchair-bound woman (Mae Bell) with a bulbous, featureless papier mâché head and an errant loop of intestines that hangs out



of her abdomen. It's revealed through flashbacks that the man was a pothead who murdered a jogger and a drug dealer, symbolically sawing his cock off with cuticle scissors somewhere in between. Then it gets disturbing.

The deliberate contradictions in this film are its strengths. The lo-fi aspects that should work against it – shaky pans, choppy edits, air compressor arterial sprays, high school art class costumes and nonsensical narrative structure – only enhance its compelling nature. The fuzz-laden, ambient industrial garage rock score provides the dialogue. Low-budget weird seldom gels this well – snag *Tantrum* online from Bell's Very Fine Crap Videos page on Storenvy.

Danish writer/director Kasper Juhl's 6000 kroner crowd-pleaser *Madness of Many* (2013) is the clumsy high-art, crass gore counterpart to Bell's inspired indie lunacy. It's a technical tour de force, sporting some exceptional cinematography and a stunning sound palette. Unfortunately...

"Pain and suffering is what sharpens the expansion of my conscience. The sufferings that are done to me opens my conscience and makes me experience that I'm not my body. And my body is not me."

The awkward, quasi-existential nihilism quoted



*Madness of Many*

above is emblematic of the main problem with this 73-minute film. It opens with Victoria (Ellen Abrahamson) explaining the horrific abuse she's suffered all her life (in voice-over) to women fake-vomiting blood. Then Victoria and the other women are physically abused for no evident purpose and throw up some more blood while Victoria drones on about pain and suffering and misery. Someone is decapitated with an axe in the film's centerpiece gore gag, but why this person's head is chopped off is never made apparent.

Of course, no one involved in the film speaks English as a first language, so criticizing the cadence and syntax of the dialogue – which is almost all voice-over – is not necessarily fair, though that could have easily been tweaked by a native English speaker. However, nothing can fix the fact that there are two basic philosophical concepts expressed over and over and over while women crawl around and spit out blood.

This film will no doubt attract an audience, the "vomit gore" stuff that underground filmmaker Lucifer Valentine makes does, and this is a naked homage to

it. Unearthed Films – which also distributes Valentine's barf-o-ramas – give *Madness of Many* a lavish three-disc release that includes a documentary and interviews on the making of the film, three shorts and a bunch of trailers. ☹

