



Another issue, another sack of cinematic treats. This issue's selections vary wildly in tone, intent, quality, and nudity qu/otient, so let us dispense with the opening formalities and dig right in.

Backwoods (Genius)

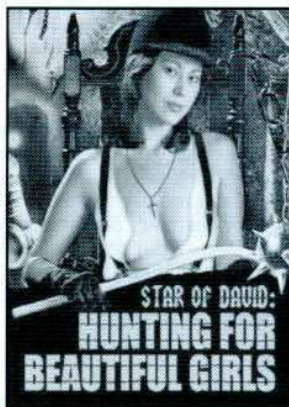
Haylie Duff, Hillary's less hot sister, is probably best known for her role as the uppity, unattainable 'Summer Wheatley' in *Napoleon Dynamite*. She plays essentially the same role here, only instead of battling nerds with crushes, it's lunatics with paintball guns (!) in this ho-hum backwoods romp that adds no new twists to the creaky survival-horror genre. I would have upped my enthusiasm level tenfold if a little celebrity skin was involved, but there is not. Curses, foiled again.

The Messengers 2 (Sony/Ghost House)

The original *Messengers*, lest we forget, was a so-so 2007 chiller starring the now red-hot Kristin Stewart (*Twilight*) as the teenage daughter in a dysfunctional family who move, of all places, to a haunted sunflower farm. A rural sort of *Shining* story soon unfolds. Part 2 is actually a prequel about the same farm, only this time, it's beset upon by killer scarecrows. Not bad, for all intents and purposes, but you've really got to ask yourself if a killer scarecrow movie is going to enrich your life, or just make it shorter. And then proceed from there.

Star of David: Hunting for Beautiful Girls (Eastern Star)

I know, right? Sounds like a Jewish serial killer flick. Directed by legendary Japanese exploitation director Norifumi Sukuji (*School of the Holy Beast*, *Sex and Fury*), this gruff n' grisly hunk of late 70's nastiness follows the thorny path of a freaked-out rich kid named Tatsuya, who finds out that his father was a notorious rapist and decides that maybe he wants to carry on in the family tradition. Bleak, depraved, and violent, *Star of David* is an eyeball-boiling descent into the abyss that hits all the expected 70's rape/revenge notes and tosses in fistfuls of weirdness on top. Good-sick, but sick, nonetheless.



Marquis De Sade's Prosperities of Vice (Mondo Macabro)

While we are on the subject of Japanese exploitation, here's a terribly-titled dark fantasy from the late 80's that offers sumptuous rewards for the patient viewer. Originally released in 1988, *Prosperities* is about a Count in the 1920's who reads a couple de Sade books and goes bonkers. He builds his own theater and employs prostitutes and lowlifes to flesh out De Sade's decadent tales. As you might imagine, things turn out badly. Directed by Akio Jissoji, best known as the visionary genius behind the *Ultraman* TV series, *Prosperities* is a veritable feast for the peepers. It does move at a glacial pace, though, so jittery types need not apply. I recommend a Nyquil/Benadryl cocktail before watching. In fact, I recommend that cocktail for just about anything.

Sea Beast (Genius)

Remember Corin Nemec, the kid from *Parker Lewis Can't Lose*? In the past couple years, he's reinvigorated his career with roles in low budget B-flicks like *RoboDoc* and *Mansquito*. Hey man, it beats working. It is debatable whether Mr. Nemec has had his finest day yet, but clearly, this is not it. Yet another in the Sci-Fi channel's (now known, apparently, as Syfy) endless series of man vs. biogenetically engineered/mythical beast dollar-bin CGI time-wasters, *Sea Beast* (formerly *Troglodyte*) is about a commercial fisherman (Nemec) who teams up with a sexy biologist (Camille Sullivan) to figure out where all the fish are disappearing to. Turns out, they're all in the belly of an ancient aqua-reptilian beastie from the ocean floor. The creature design is pretty snazzy in this one—he has paralyzing spit!—and the CGI is not as dodgy as you might expect. Still, it's just a low-budget *Jaws* rip-off, and just how many of these do you have to watch in a lifetime? If your answer is none, than please move on. If your answer is 729, add this to your must-buy list immediately.

Gothkill (Wild Eye)

Wild Eye, who brought us the head-spinning, zero-budget Nazisploitation flick *Blitzkrieg: Escape from Stalag 69* a couple years back, have returned with yet another overreaching shot-on-video piece of fun/irritating junk. *Gothkill* tells the tawdry tale of a priest who bargains with the devil for immortality and his very own slice of hell. All he has to do to get it is kill several centuries' worth of black-clad hipsters. And so that's what he does. Shot primarily in an NYC goth club (and in a public park) and cast with various S&M bondage/fetish luminaries, there is a good chance that *Gothkill* could be your favorite movie ever, if you really hate goth kids. I mean, the title is no lie, dozens of 'em are stabbed, eviscerated, and otherwise slaughtered in this goofy little tongue-in-cheek romp. However, it's also filled with tacky 'special effects', bad/non acting, and a noisy soundtrack. Is it worth the trouble? It would probably be easier to just strangle some goth kid yourself.



Embodiment of Evil (Anchor Bay UK DVD/Blu-ray)

Having finally served his time for raising literal hell for the past several decades, an 80-year-old Coffin Joe (Jose Mojica Martins) is released from Ye Olde Asylum and asked to behave himself. He immediately hooks up with a gang of young devotees, who convince him to get back into the girl-killing game. He renews his quest to find the ultimate woman to continue his wretched bloodline, slaughtering inferior candidates and various witless bystanders and hangers-on along the way. While it is very much a modern horror flick and never touches on the jaw-dropping otherworldliness of Marin's 60's -70's Coffin Joe films, *Embodiment* is still a very clever reintroduction of the legendary character, and it throws in enough blood n' breasts to keep the hardcore splatter/exploitation fans raised on Something Weird's 1990's Coffin Joe reissues satisfied. Given Marin's age, we may never see another Coffin Joe movie, so this serves a fitting coda to the wild, wild world of Brazilian cinema's bad-ass boogieman. Recommended.

