

THE WEEK'S NEW MOVIES, MUSIC, THEATRE, CABARET & ART

PREVIEW

ART SARAH KENT ON HENRY MOORE **CABARET** MALCOLM HAY ON THE PERRIER'S PICK **MUSIC**
 NICK COLEMAN ON THE INCORPORATED THANG **GAY** MICHAEL GRIFFITHS TALKS TO JACKIE KAY
 FILM GEOFF ANDREW ON SPIRIT LEVELS **THEATRE** JANE EDUARDES ON WHITEHALL FARCE

RICKY SLAUGHTER

TRASH VIDEOS



There's one thing you have to say for the current batch of video B-movie directors — they do *care* about their audiences. Take for example the disclaimer which opens Fred Olen Ray's 'Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers': 'The chainsaws used in this picture are REAL and DANGEROUS. They are handled here by seasoned PROFESSIONALS. The makers of this motion picture advise strongly against anyone attempting to per-

form these stunts at home. Especially if you are naked and about to engage in strenuous SEX.'

If that's not good enough for you, how about the approach adopted by 'Hack 'Em High'? Here nervous viewers are provided with two warning symbols which pop up on the screen throughout the movie. The Gore Gong appears and sounds when blood or brutality is in the offing, while the Honker Hooter is used to warn of upcoming nudity. When these warnings are sounded, gentle souls in the audience are advised to 'shut your eyes, cover your ears and hold your nose'.

What all these 'warnings' are actually about is, of course, movie showmanship of a kind not seen since William Castle. Castle produced such late '50s masterpieces as *The Tingler* — for which he planted electric shock buzzers in the auditorium seats — and *Mr Sardonicus*, which was issued to theatres with two separate endings and a set of Punishment Poll cards allowing audiences to vote on the villain's fate.

Whether you're talking about a '50s drive-in or an '80s videocassette glimpsed barely over the edge of a six-pack, it's hard not to warm up to a director who wasn't satisfied with merely completing the movie in hand; one who finishes the last cut and then says 'Right, what *else* can we do to have fun with this?' Look at Troma — those wonderful folks who brought you 'Demented Death Farm Massacre The Movie' and the 'Toxic Avenger' series. They used the 1987 American Film Fair to offer potential buyers a 'free giant-sized 1cc bottle of Aroma du Troma', and God, I'd love to know what it smells like.

Now, I'd be the last person to lie to you and say that movies like 'Vampire Hookers' (sell line: 'Blood isn't all they suck') or 'I Was a Teenage Sex Mutant' are invariably as much fun to watch as they are to swap facts about. Anyone who's actually *seen* 'Surf Nazis Must Die' will tell you that every ounce of wit and imagination at the makers' disposal went on the title and sleeve design. The movie itself commits a sin far worse than being tasteless: it's dull.

But this should hardly come as a surprise. The very freedom from reliance on the cinema circuit which made these movies possible in the first place means that you're unlikely to have seen any reviews of 'The Girlfriend from Hell' or 'Hell Comes to Frogtown' when you're engaged in impulse rental, and of course the cassette itself offers no clues. All you *can* go by is title and sleeve. These things are as pure an example of packaging over product as you're ever likely to see.

That's not to say you should entirely dismiss the movies beneath those wonderfully lurid wrappers on the top shelf, however. I'd recommend checking out anything with the Troma, Beyond Infinity or Colourbox names attached as likely to contain at least a smidgeon of wit. A firm called Mondo Video is also just setting about the task of making the older Golden Turkeys/Jonathan Ross stuff available on video, starting with Ray Dennis Steckler's 'The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-up Zombies' and 'Rat Fink A Boo Boo'.

'Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers' — likely to be the next biggie cult favourite — has just been made available for video rental following a rave review at the Scala's recent Shock Around the Clock festival, and is actually very good. By this I mean that it supplies a more than adequate dose of visual amphetamine while also offering several Real Live Jokes. The plot is roughly as follows: Los Angeles private eye Jack Chandler (geddit?) is trying to track down a teenage runaway, a case which he feels sure is somehow connected with a spate of chainsaw murders carried out by the city's hookers. Jack tracks the girl down only to find that she and the hookers have — wouldn't you know it — been recruited by an ancient Egyptian cult of chainsaw worshippers. He is dragged off to their temple, treated to a quick performance of the Virgin Dance of the Double



Chainsaws and very nearly carved up himself. ('Say, what's with Samantha, she looks kind of distant?' 'Oh, she's at one with the gods.')

Finally we get a heavily choreographed chainsaw fight, the bad guy gets his and the police show up to (ahem) pick up the pieces.

Apparently the film will end up simply as 'Hollywood Hookers' in this country, with a chainsaw graphic replacing the remaining word, as the British Board of Film Classification is somewhat touchy about the term chainsaw. Perhaps it is worried by the presence in 'HCH' of Gunnar Hansen, who played Leatherface in the original 'Texas Chainsaw Massacre'.

As for those jokes I was mentioning, well, there's the scene where one of the hookers carefully covers her Elvis poster in plastic sheeting while a bemused John looks on, unaware she is about to produce a chainsaw from the third drawer of her bedroom cabinet. I also like the scene where one of the hookers is trying to seduce Jack Chandler in a bar. 'What's that you're drinking?' asks Jack. 'A screaming orgasm,' replies the girl, vamping it up for all she's worth. 'Somehow,' says Jack, casting a world-weary eye at the camera, 'somehow, I knew it would be.'

'HCH' also, incidentally, stars current trash queen Linnea Quigley, recently described in the *Daily Telegraph* as 'a pleasant down-to-earth girl from Davenport, Iowa', and also known as America's most murdered actress. Speaking of which, I should point out that all the dismemberment in 'HCH' happens (just) out of view, with buckets of blood and assorted bits and pieces of flesh hurled in from off camera. In fact, compared to the graphic violence of something like the 'Friday the 13th' series it's all quite, er, tasteful. Funnier too.

Other upcoming stuff which I haven't seen, but which looks promising from the previews, includes: 'The Brain' ('A TV psychologist mind-controls a small town by means of a giant carnivorous human brain'), 'Twins' ('Identical twin gynaecologists become involved with the same woman') and 'Out Cold' ('A ménage à trois in a black comedy about love, death and refrigeration'). Chillin'!

In closing, it must be said that this stuff is not for everybody. Those who found 'Wings of Desire' okay but a bit lightweight will probably not get a great deal out of 'Redneck Zombies' or 'Assault of the Killer Bimbos'. If, on the other hand, you're the sort of person who was pleased to learn (courtesy of *Screen International*) that the upcoming 'Hellraiser II' is to deliver 60 gallons of blood, 40 gallons of slime and three gallons of vomit, well, it could just be that you're in for some fun . . .

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