

Horror Roundup

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RESUMEN (ENGLISH)

HORROR In Hobb's End London, construction of a new subway tunnel is halted when prehistoric hominid fossils are discovered. Even stranger is the metallic device found in the same stratum; at first believed to be an unexploded buzzbomb dropped in World War II, scientific testing eventually reveals that the manufactured contraption is as ancient as the fossils. With so much evidence pointing to Alice, could she indeed be the killer?

VERDICT One of the most neglected films in the development of the slasher genre, Alfred Sole's outstanding work of terror has an appropriately off-kilter story rhythm covering a delicious and labyrinthine mystery. Taken to jail, he proceeds to show a preternatural amount of knowledge about the town, particularly every kind of dirty-dealing, lustful, destructive, and criminal act hidden from the community by venerated townfolks, which unnerves part-time constable Mike (Tim Daly), who suspects there is something unnatural at work.

TEXTO COMPLETO

***We Have Always Lived In The Castle.* 90+ min. Stacie Passon, Passion River. 2019. DVD UPC 602573752784 \$19.99. HORROR**

Mysterious Merricat Blackwood (Taissa Farmiga) lives with her alluring sister Constance (Alexandra Daddario) and ailing uncle (Crispen Glover) in a stately manor. Merricat's parents were poisoned and killed years ago during their nightly meal. While charged with the heinous crime, Constance was ultimately acquitted. The town, however, still believes she did it, and there is lingering resentment among locals for their dead father and the economic power he wielded. The stalemate between the remaining Blackwood family and the local citizenry, which Merricat believes she has maintained through obsessive observance of ritual and magic spells she casts, such as nails in trees and hiding household objects underground, is tested when Cousin Charles (Sebastian Stan) arrives and inserts himself into the household. Nothing Merricat does will dissuade Charles from wooing Constance and upsetting the delicate balance of the family, so methods harsher than the supernatural may be needed to eliminate the threat.

VERDICT Grand dame of horror Shirley Jackson's literary tale of the gothic imagination comes to feverishly wonderful life in this tense adaptation.

***Quatermass and the Pit.* 90+ min. Roy Ward Baker, Shout! Factory. 1968. Blu-ray UPC 826663198188 \$30.79. HORROR**

In Hobb's End London, construction of a new subway tunnel is halted when prehistoric hominid fossils are discovered. Even stranger is the metallic device found in the same stratum; at first believed to be an unexploded buzzbomb dropped in World War II, scientific testing eventually reveals that the manufactured contraption is as ancient as the fossils. While investigating, noted scientist Bernard Quatermass (Andrew Kier) hears about the history of the area, reputed throughout history for having outbreaks of ghost and goblin sightings, as well as other unusual psychic phenomena. As Quatermass begins to formulate an idea about what the found object might really be, Colonel Breen (Julian Glover) insists that it is nothing more than a piece of wartime propaganda dropped but forgotten before it could affect the war. As work speeds up to extract the object, exposure to electrical energy eventually unleashes unfocused psychic and physical power within the object and its true purpose is revealed while London shakes. **VERDICT** Nigel Kneales's massively inventive sf horror tale presents a compelling celestial mystery with a crackerjack ending.

***Dead Don't Die in Dallas.* 91+ min. Israel Luna, Mill Creek Entertainment. 2019. DVD UPC 683904707468 \$29.98.**

HORROR

Reverend Sam Jeffress (Richard D. Curtin) and wife Janice (Krystal Summers) set up for Sunday services at the same time that sweet Beth-Anne (Willam Belli) arrives to work as a hairdresser. They soon discover that flesh-eating, mindless zombies are overrunning the town and consuming everybody in sight. These dire circumstances force both the Jeffresses and Beth-Anne to hole up in a building with tough-as-nails, gun-wielding MMA fighter Philomena (Angel Martinez). As the sociologically disparate survivors are forced to work together, the Jeffresses' deeply closeted son attempts to get back to his family after being separated in the initial attack, worried about the zombies but just as concerned about whether his extremely conservative parents will accept him. **VERDICT** Director Israel Luna (*The Ouija Experiment*) offers a fun, campy zombie romp that delivers grindhouse-style gore along with a humorous but thoroughly humanist message of acceptance.

***Alice, Sweet Alice.* 107+ min. Alfred Sole, Arrow Video c/o MVD Visual. 1976. Blu-ray UPC 760137275985. \$27.97.**

HORROR

On the day on her first communion, Karen (Brooke Shields) is murdered in church. There is no evidence to tie anyone to the crime, but police suspect Karen's strange older sister Alice (Paula Sheppard). Their mother Catherine (Linda Miller) refuses to believe Alice could have done it, and her father (Niles McMaster) comes back to town to uncover the real maniac responsible. Alice, however, continues to be the brat she normally is, annoying her mother's perverted landlord, enjoying her childhood treasures in the basement of their house, and otherwise acting as a little terror. Meanwhile, the killer continues assaulting others, brutally attacking Alice's aunt in the stairwell of their home. With so much evidence pointing to Alice, could she indeed be the killer? **VERDICT** One of the most neglected films in the development of the slasher genre, Alfred Sole's outstanding work of terror has an appropriately off-kilter story rhythm covering a delicious and labyrinthine mystery.

***Thirst.* 135+ min. In Japanese w/English Subtitles. Chan-wook Park, Kino Lorber. 2009. Blu-Ray UPC 738329238223. \$29.95. HORROR**

Father Sang-hyun (Kang-ho Song) volunteers to be infected by a particularly virulent and heinous disease to help find an experimental cure. The only survivor out of 500 test subjects, he gains fame as a blessed healer. This believed ability pulls him back into the orbit of a man suffering with esophageal cancer. As Sang-hyun appears to cure the man's disease through prayer, he discovers that his own cure has come with a heavy price—he is now essentially a vampire who must ingest blood regularly lest his disease return. Another challenge to his deeply religious outlook is that Tae-ju (Ok-bin Kim), the new wife of the man he healed, is an incendiary woman who latches onto Sang-hyun to escape her current dull existence. An intense romantic and sexual affair begins between the two as their burgeoning passions explode in a flurry of bloodlust, murder, and love. **VERDICT** Park Chan-Wook's wild ride of a film echoes elements of long-established vampire mythos, creating a startling and original pair of monster lovers.

***Haxan: Witchcraft Through The Ages.* Tinted B&W. Silent w/Intertitles. 90+ min. Benjamin Christensen, Criterion Collection. 1922/1968. Blu-ray UPC 715515235617 \$39.95. HORROR**

The history of European witchcraft unfolds through this documentary interspersed with reenactments and dramatic interpretations. Traditional imagery about European witchcraft conveys the ideas held in the distant past about the satanic witches of legend and folklore. Hags skulk around cauldrons conjuring spells, while young lovelies are seduced by lecherous devils with flickering tongues, Witches' Sabbaths occur complete with rump kissing and religious desecration, and demons walk the earth while crones fly through the air. Such darkly fanciful scenes are contrasted with an unfolding story of how innocent people accused of witchcraft were caught up in religious hysteria and brutally tortured to extract false confessions. **VERDICT** This 1922 Swedish-Danish masterwork of horror has been lovingly restored to present the film as it would have looked when released. The 1968 edit complete with spoken-word accompaniment by William S. Burroughs narrating over jazz is included as an extra, but the restored version shines by using its quasi-documentary style to thoughtfully interrogate the subject.

***Stephen King's Storm of the Century.* 257+ min. Craig Baxley, Kino Lorber. 1999. DVD UPC 738329238179. \$29.95.**

TELEVISION/HORROR

The small Maine community of Little Tall Island braces itself to be cut off from the mainland during a major snow and ice event. Before the first frozen precipitation can fall, Andre Linoge (Colm Feore) arrives on the scene and brutally beats an elderly woman to death with his cane. When the crime is discovered, Andre is still in the house, waiting to be arrested. Taken to jail, he proceeds to show a preternatural amount of knowledge about the town, particularly every kind of dirty-dealing, lustful, destructive, and criminal act hidden from the community by venerated townfolks, which unnerves part-time constable Mike (Tim Daly), who suspects there is something unnatural at work. As the snow begins to pile up, and as Andre's mind games begin to generate terror amongst the freezing community, he continues to make a simple offer to Mike: give me what I want, and I'll go away. **VERDICT** Prolific scribe King's first original teleplay is creepy perfection that will freeze audiences to their screens.

***Baby Blood.* In French with English Subtitles, and English Dub. 87+ min. Alain Robak, Kino Lorber. 1990. Blu-ray UPC 738329240028. \$32.95 DVD UPC 738329240011. \$21.95. HORROR**

Yanka (Emmanuelle Escourrou) is a circus performer with an abusive boyfriend and nowhere else to go. One night, a strange lifeform explodes out of the body of a recently acquired big cat and crawls its way into her uterus. Freaked out by the entity's commandeering of her body, Yanka flees the circus and takes up residence in a dilapidated hovel. She begins to hear the creature talk to her in her mind; it needs human blood for nourishment, and it wants to be carried for a full-term pregnancy so that it can be born like a human being. Yanka finds it relatively easy to kill and feast on her abusive former beau's blood when he tracks her down, but as the months continue and the pregnancy advances, she finds the beast's demands easier and easier to fill. A strange bond develops between Yanka and the oddly insightful parasite as the cycle completes. **VERDICT** Outrageously gory but dramatically fulfilling, *Baby Blood* boldly delivers on its unusual premise.

***The Dark Side of the Moon.* 87+ min. D.J.Webster, MVD Visual. 1990. Blu-ray UPC 760137240884. \$19.95. DVD UPC 760137240990 \$14.95. HORROR/SF**

Spacecore-1 experiences unusual trouble while attempting to perform routine repairs to a nuclear satellite. Their sudden loss of power causes the spaceship to drift to the dark side of the moon, where they discover a NASA space shuttle. Using the last of their remaining power to dock, they are able to get much-needed oxygen and electrical systems back up and running. Onboard the derelict spacecraft, they find the body of a recently deceased crewmember with a triangular shape cut out of the skin on their abdomen. With no one else aboard, and research via their own ship's AI concluding that the shuttle was reported destroyed decades ago, the crew is left with a mystery which only deepens as they realize that the ship was reported to have crashed down in the Bermuda Triangle, killing everyone on board. The strange nature of their situation diverts attention away from the deadly forces unknowingly aboard the ship. **VERDICT** An unusual combination of hard sf with supernatural scares in outer space, this neglected classic unleashes gristly but stylish cosmic terror.

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