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THE BEDLAM FILES

End-of-Year recommendation lists for both film and print. Plus our dandy subscribers-only content.

Happy New Year!

Unheralded Musical Misfires



1. **CAN HEIRONYMOUS MERKIN EVER FORGET MERCY HUMPPE AND FIND TRUE HAPPINESS?** (1969)

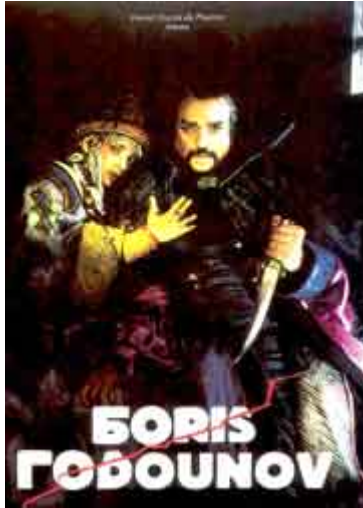
An unabashed celluloid ego trip from the veteran actor/singer Anthony Newley. He plays a debauched showman looking back over his life, which he's turned into a museum on a beach; naturally most of his escapades involve scantily clad women (the film was originally rated X), including a young Joan Collins. 8½ this definitely isn't, but you'll have to



7. **THE GONG SHOW MOVIE** (1980)

That this film, directed by and starring THE GONG SHOW host Chuck Barris, is a travesty should come as no surprise to anyone. It was, however, co-scripted by the famed avant-gardist Robert Downey Sr., whose brand of late-60's cool is on display throughout, and contains at least one show-stopping musical number (the ensemble tune "Don't Get up for Me"), along with a wealth of uncensored outtakes from the show.

go a LONG way to find a more rapid fire barrage of surreal insanity.



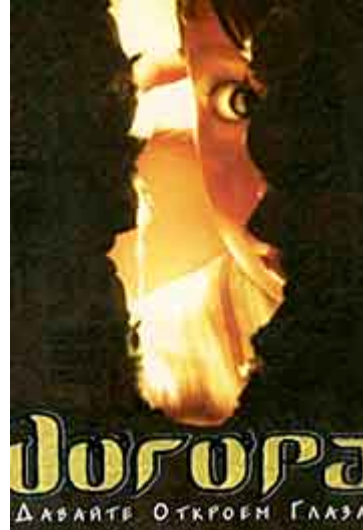
2. **BORIS GODOUNOV** (1989)

An epic spectacle that dramatizes the famous Mussorgsky opera of the same name, complete with sung dialogue. The film suffered heavy post-production editing that made a hash of the narrative, and had its release severely curtailed, but it's a positively mind-boggling technical achievement, and a standout effort by the late Andrzej Zulawski.



3. **ALL THIS AND WORLD WAR II** (1976)

Almost certainly the oddest of the many musical flops that appeared in the late 1970s, this is a compilation of newsreel footage and movie clips depicting WWII, with a soundtrack comprised of disco-fied Beatles



8. **DOGORA** (2004)

A so-called "essay film" in the mold of KOYAANISQATSI and BARAKA, made by France's Patrice Leconte. It's a nonlinear travelogue of poverty-stricken Cambodia, set to a bombastic orchestral score. Leconte doesn't appear to have a whole lot to say about Cambodia or its residents, with the film's major selling points being the handsomely composed visuals and at times uplifting music.



9. **FANTASTICA** (1980)

A Canadian made musical reverie directed by Gilles Carle and starring Carole Laure, who previously collaborated on the notorious arthouse provocation **THE ANGEL AND THE WOMAN**. FANTASTICA isn't too far removed from the former film, being rambling, scatterbrained and plain nutty. It's also packed with flamboyant Ken Russell-esque music numbers and

covers. It's every bit as ludicrous as it sounds, although I must admit that the sight of the Invasion of Normandy set to "A Day in the Life" is a mighty engaging one.

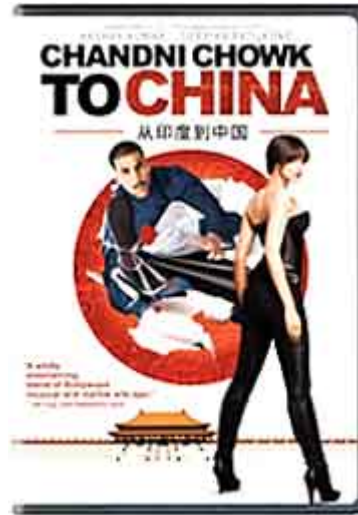


4. 7 YEAR ZIG ZAG (2001)

A forgotten product of the early days of the DVD revolution that, as I recall, made a near instantaneous trip to the discount bins. The pic is a quasi-documentary by actor/musician Richard Green, who recounts his musical career in an 83-minute montage propelled by impassioned on camera narration, spoken entirely in rhyme and set to a rousing swing beat. An entertaining watch, even though it is ultimately a bit too much of a good thing.



a sense of "reality" that grows increasingly surreal.



10. CHANDNI CHOWK TO CHINA (2009)

This expensive Indian-American co-production was supposed to be a crossover Bollywood hit, but that, needless to say, didn't occur. The film is somewhat enjoyable, with lots of breakneck action and some catchy music numbers, but it suffers from the major problem of most Bollywood fare: its narrative is far too flimsy to support the ultra-expansive two hour-plus runtime.

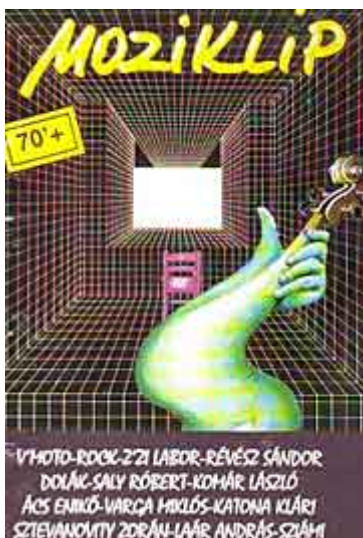


11. STRANGERS IN PARADISE (1984)

I'm surprised this engagingly ridiculous sci fi musical never attained much of a following, as it makes for a perfect companion-piece to the cult mainstay THE APPLE (1980). STRANGERS IN

5. WINDS OF CHANGE (METAMORPHOSES)

Another case of a film ruined, or at least lessened, by post production meddling. An interesting animated rendering of several tales from Ovid's METAMORPHOSES, this film is of particular note because it's dialogue-free, with only a succession of pop tunes to (initially) hold it together. After its disastrous initial release the soundtrack was replaced with new songs by the disco crooner Alec Costandinos and pithy narration by Peter Ustinov. This new and unimproved WINDS OF CHANGE didn't do any better than the previous one, but it's currently the only available version.



6. MOZIKLIP (1987)

Hungary's Peter Timar was known as a special effects whiz when he made this film, consisting of songs by eighteen Hungarian pop bands visualized via musically oriented "clips of time"--or, as they're better known, music videos--that apparently offer a late 1980s "snapshot of society." To be sure, there are some strikingly oft-kilter images on display, but... *why???*

PARADISE was made by the R.W. Fassbinder acolyte Ulli Lommel, who was evidently attempting something along the lines of THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW but failed rather spectacularly.



12. TELL ME LIES (1968)

England's Peter Brook followed up **MARAT/SADE** with this ham-fisted anti-Vietnam screed. It loses its focus early on in an undisciplined riot of stylized music numbers, on-the-street interviews, lengthy intellectual arguments about the morality of war, etc., although with such a scattershot approach some striking elements do inevitably make their way to the surface.



13. L'UNIQUE (1986)

This French science fictioner has been credited as the first-ever European pic to utilize CGI. Beyond that L'UNIQUE

functions as, essentially, an extended music video promo for the renowned opera soprano Julia Migenes, playing a (most unlikely) rock star who's set to be replaced with a holographic double. Some interesting concepts are introduced (such as the creation of miniature-sized doubles-of-doubles), but they, like the film overall, ultimately go nowhere.

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- **Lucio Fulci's Gates of Hell**
- **Cats**
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Noteworthy publications.
- **2019: The Year in Bedlam**
23 great films plus DVD/Blu-Ray recommendations.
- **2019: A Look Back in Bedlam**
Commentaries on Marvel, reboots, publishers, literary and cinematic discoveries, and notable deaths (there were lots).



The Horror, The Horror

Sorry to keep bringing up a movie that most of the world would rather forget, but I haven't been able to shake the belief that I've seen the title creatures of **CATS** somewhere before.

Now I know where: the Clive Barker horror classic **NIGHTBREED** (1989).

Featured below are side-by-side stills of the critters from CATS & NIGHTBREED. Which is which? I'll leave that up to you to figure out. Likewise the question of

which set of creatures are truly the scariest...



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The Bedlam Files

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