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THE BEDLAM FILES

With Adam Groves

At Least there are Films

In these dismal times it's important to count one's blessings — although if you happen to be residing in California right now (as I do) there really aren't too many to count. At least some interesting films have turned up in recent weeks, including...

Streaming Now



1. **HAPPY HAPPY JOY JOY: THE REN & STIMPY STORY**

A doco about the legendary animated program REN & STIMPY and its genius creator John Kricfalusi. Like many a genius before him, Kricfalusi lost his way (and, evidently, his mind), alienating both his crew and his superiors, and developing a lamentable attraction to several underage girls. This film features extensive interviews with a defeated-looking Kricfalusi and his former co-

Adam's Picks



1. **YOU DON'T KNOW ME, BUT YOU LOVE ME By CAELUM VATNSDAL**

I'm amazed this 2018 biography didn't get more attention, as its subject, the late supporting actor Dick Miller, renders it an automatic must-read for all film buffs. Author Caelum Vatnsdal provides an excellent portrait of this quirky and enduring icon, with profiles of nearly all his 180-plus film appearances. Don't know Dick Miller? See the title!

workers, as well as plenty of footage from REN & STIMPY, showing that it is indeed a program worth documenting. iTUNES



2. 2020: AN ISOLATION ODYSSEY

In which artist-designer Lydia Cambron recreates the final scenes of **2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY** in her Brooklyn apartment (complete with a split screen to show us how precisely Cambron's images match up with those of the earlier film). Featured is a facemask wearing Cambron in the Kier Dullea role, an upright Pilates machine in place of the monolith and various household objects standing in for the star child. Essentially a covid era goof, but a potent and ingenious work nonetheless. VIMEO



3. THE SHIPMENT

BOOK



2. MY BEST FRIEND'S BIRTHDAY: THE MAKING OF A QUENTIN TARANTINO FILM By ANDREW J. RAUSCH

An absorbing account of the (un)making and (non)reception of Quentin Tarantino's first feature, a no-budget comedy shot in and around the **video store where he once worked**. I'll confess my enjoyment of this book was largely due to the fact that I used to frequent the video store in question, and am extensively quoted in the text.

BOOK



3. NIGHT ON THE TOWN

Precisely what this animated short might have to do with our current situation I don't know, but it deserves to

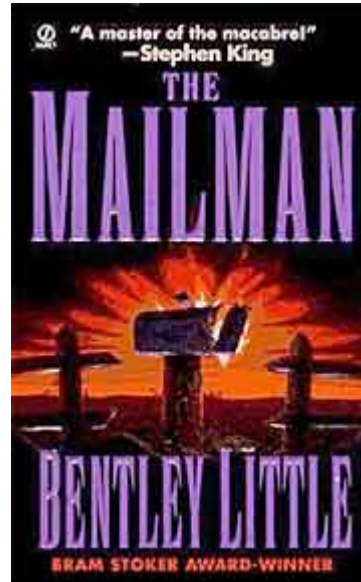
People have been speculating for years that the day will come when home movies will be capable of competing with Hollywood blockbusters, and this 30 minute sci fi short, from the Vancouver-based Bobby Bala, suggests that day may have finally arrived. The story, about a space-bound cargo hauler compromising his ethics to provide for his daughter, is a bit overly sappy, and the film as a whole is not entirely satisfying (if anything it's *too* slick), but the CGI effects, achieved through absurdly limited means, are breathtaking. AMAZON



4. SHE DIES TOMORROW

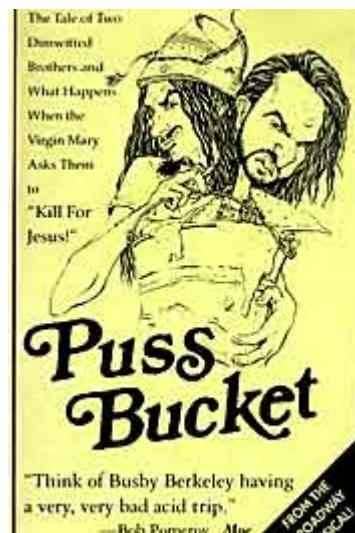
The second feature directed by actress and sometime filmmaker Amy Seimet, who's created a strange and elliptical psychological horror movie about a malady that spreads suicidal despair from person to person. The contemporary parallels should be obvious in a film that's not as terrible as some are claiming (it's certainly not the "worst movie ever made," as has been said by several internet wags), nor as great as others have asserted. Taken purely as a disquieting mood piece, however, it works quite well. AMAZON

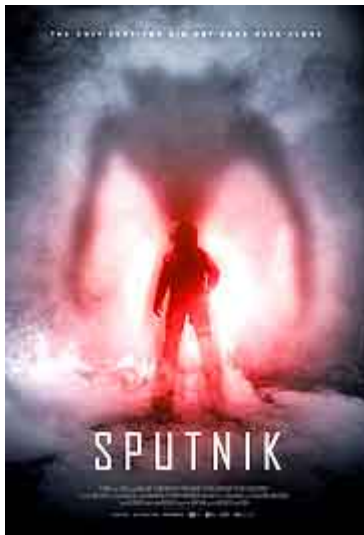
be better known. Hailing from 1981 (when it reportedly scandalized more than one student film festival), it's a stop motion depiction of an urban Hell on Earth, experienced by a hallucinating drunk who has trouble distinguishing between the horrific visions conjured by his subconscious and the ugliness of the "real" world. FILM



4. THE MAILMAN By BENTLEY LITTLE

An early effort by the talented Bentley Little, about a demonic entity that wreaks havoc on a small town in the guise of a mailman. Imagine: an attempt at division and disruption by sabotaging the US postal service! That could *never* happen, could it? BOOK





5. **SPUTNIK**

A Russian import that offers further evidence of the continuing influence of ALIEN. SPUTNIK, about an astronaut who returns to Earth with a monstrous parasite in his belly, should frankly be a lot better than the erratically paced and derivative (of the aforementioned ALIEN and nearly every other monster movie from the past three decades) product it is. What it has in its favor is a nifty CGI critter; monster movies, as we all know, are wholly dependent on the quality of the monster, and the one displayed here ranks with the best. AMAZON

5. **PUSS BUCKET**

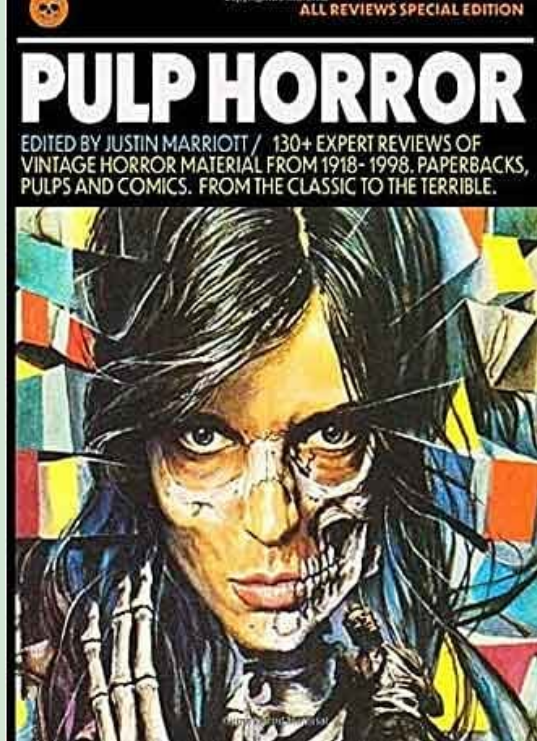
Psychotic siblings! Aliens! The Virgin Mary! Song and dance numbers! A gloriously nutty relic from the glory days of **Film Threat Video**, PUSS BUCKET (apparently “From the Broadway Musical”) is probably pretty difficult to find nowadays, but well worth tracking down. FILM



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INSIDER NOTES

Here I'll observe the passing of **Linda Manz**, one of Hollywood's greatest, and most underutilized, resources. Beginning her acting career as a teenager in *DAYS OF HEAVEN* (1978), this self-proclaimed "tough little rebel" wasn't a prolific actor, but her dozen-or-so film appearances were always worth the wait. I have a particular affection for her work in *DAYS OF HEAVEN* (in which, admittedly, she's never too convincing as the sister of the more urbane Richard Gere), which was bolstered by terrifically naïve-yet-cynical narration that, it turns out, was entirely ad-libbed by Manz, who provided gems like (in observing wealthy folks frolicking) "I'm tellin' ya, the rich got it figured out" and (commenting on the lonely existence of one of the film's protagonists) "that's touchin'."



We mustn't forget her later work in *THE WANDERERS* (1979), where she played an underage gang moll (a role that was apparently not far from Manz's off-screen existence), and *OUT OF*

THE BLUE (1980), in which she was ideally cast as what's been called the "punkest" girl in film history. As a grown-up Manz was part of the notorious bathtub sequence in **GUMMO** (1997), surely one of the most casually grotesque movie scenes of all time, and THE GAME (1997), in which she made her final, too-brief film appearance.

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The Bedlam Files

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