

# THE BEDLAM FILES

*With Adam Groves*

## No Politics

With the US presidential election looming, the media landscape (as I'm sure I don't need to inform you) is **becoming increasingly politicized**. Here I'll be taking the opposite tack, refraining from referencing current events in favor of some apolitical entertainment — although as Steve Martin (who thrived in the early 1970s by putting on a standup routine without any Vietnam references) might say, oftentimes an apolitical stance is in fact the most “political” attitude of all.

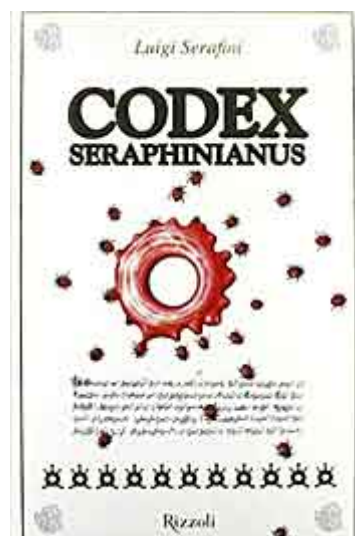
## Streaming Now



### 1. COBRA KAI

Unabashed nostalgia porn for Gen-Xers. This series (which has amassed two seasons thus far, with a third on the way) depicts the lives of **THE KARATE KID**'s principals Daniel (Ralph Macchio) and Johnny (William Zabka) in middle age. Both, of course, still reside in the San Fernando Valley locale where THE KARATE KID was set, and continue to obsess over the

## Adam's Picks



### 1. CODEX SERAPHINIANUS by LUIGI SERAFINI

Speaking of distant planets, this is simply the ultimate work of otherworldly fiction: an illustrated guidebook to an imaginary world, written in an invented language that nobody has yet been able to decipher. A positively eye-popping work of pure imagination that fully earns its frequently invoked

tournament in which they competed back in 1984. Given the overtly nostalgic thrust it's no surprise that the weakest portions are the scenes with Macchio and Zabka's (supposed) kids; this is a grown-up show all the way, and enormous fun if you're of the right orientation (*i.e.* a repeat KARATE KID viewer). NETFLIX

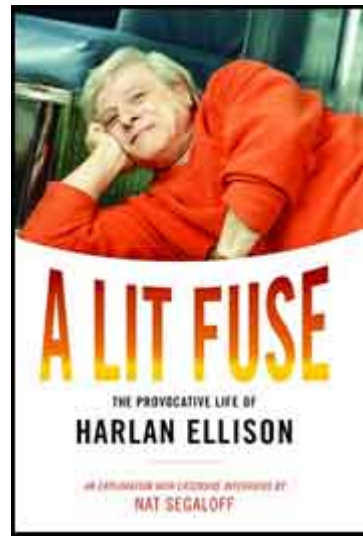


## 2. FAST TIMES AT RIDGEMONT HIGH VIRTUAL TABLE READ

More irresistible Gen-X nostalgia, with Brad Pitt, Jennifer Aniston, Julia Roberts, John Legend and others doing a virtual read of several scenes from the **FAST TIMES AT RIDGEMONT HIGH** script. Highlights include narrator Morgan Freeman intoning "*lord have mercy!*" while reciting the masturbation sequence and Shia LaBeouf doing a very method-y interpretation of Jeff Spicoli (while the role's original interpreter Sean Penn looks on, amused). Great fun, but (needless to say) this is not — repeat: *not* — an acceptable substitute for the 1982 original. YOUTUBE

Strangest Book in the World designation.

BOOK



## 2. A LIT FUSE: THE PROVOCATIVE LIFE OF HARLAN ELLISON by NAT SEGALOFF

The one and only biography of the late **Harlan Ellison**. Author Nat Segaloff deserves props for staring down this particular rough beast, who by all accounts behaved entirely as you'd expect him to as this book was being written (which is to say: as an unfettered gadfly). What emerged is a terrifically provocative read, and deserving of a much wider exposure than it's received thus far.

BOOK





### 3. I'M THINKING OF ENDING THINGS

In which the always eclectic and unpredictable Charlie Kaufman (of BEING JOHN MALKOVICH, ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND and many others) adapts Iain Reid's literary horror novel about a guy and gal on a most fateful road trip. Kaufman wrecks his own peculiar magic on the material, creating a surreal dreamscape whose narrative arc will be incomprehensible to anyone who hasn't read the novel. NETFLIX



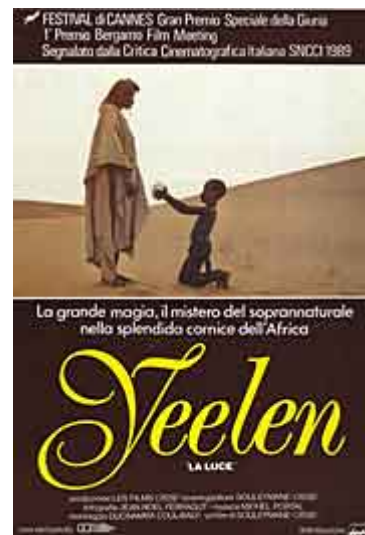
### 4. THE DEVIL ALL THE TIME

An adaptation of Donald Ray Pollock's "country noir" classic about a troubled young man (Tom Holland) living in a godforsaken southern burg in the

### 3. RAT PFINK A BOO BOO

Some seriously dumb fun for these dark times, a no-budget thriller-cum superhero themed musical-comedy from the incomparable **Ray Dennis Steckler**. It began as a suspensor called THE DEPRAVED, only to mutate into RAT PFINK AND BOO BOO after Steckler grew bored with the film he was making, and ended up as RAT PFINK A BOO BOO due to a never-corrected mistake in the opening credits — a title that perfectly approximates the insane nature of the film it graces.

FILM



### 4. YEELLEN

It's always a surprise to see an African movie made by and starring Africans (as opposed to white women looking to find themselves on the Dark Continent). Here's one such example, a visionary and picturesque depiction of sorcery and folklore in a mythologically informed narrative that owes nothing to Hollywood.

FILM

1960s. Orbiting him are a retinue of perverts, killers and assorted eccentrics, played by an impressive roster of talent. This is very much an A-list project, with handsomely mounted visuals that somewhat offset the darkness of the narrative, which contains nearly every imaginable outrage. NETFLIX



## 5. **RAISED BY WOLVES**

Easily the most interesting thing Ridley Scott has done in years (if not decades), a science fiction series set on a distant planet where several unique children are birthed and brought up. I'm still at an early point in the program, and so have a number of questions (such as how it is that the children in question are of different ethnicities and speak in clashing accents) that I trust will be answered in subsequent episodes. HBOMAX



## 5. **WATCHMEN**

Given the popularity of the WATCHMEN HBO series (which I, for the record, still haven't watched), I think a look back at this largely forgotten 2009 filming of the material is in order. No, the movie isn't a "neglected masterpiece" by any means, but it *is* among the most unique and ambitious comic book adaptations of our time.

FILM

---

## Also NEW on the Site!

- **Mushroom Man**
- **Geoff Murphy: A Life on Film**
- **Tender is the Flesh**
- **Blood Letters and Trashy Movies in the South Sea**

- **Exotic Dancers and the Devil in the Swinging Sixties**
- **Diamond Pyramid**
- *And Much More!*



## INSIDER NOTES

This week we bid farewell to the American cinematographer **Michael Chapman**. If you're a film buff you're almost certainly familiar with Chapman's superlative work on the Martin Scorsese classics TAXI DRIVER, THE LAST WALTZ, AMERICAN BOY and RAGING BULL. Chapman's work on the latter film was an especially impressive feat given that he admittedly didn't like it (the primary reason he and Scorsese didn't work together again).



Other standout Michael Chapman efforts include FINGERS, THE WANDERERS, DEAD MEN DON'T WEAR PLAID, GOTHAM and THE FUGITIVE, each of which offer a masterclass in the art of cinematography. Chapman's images often vastly improved the films they visualized (I continue to insist that he deserves most of the credit for **THE LOST BOYS**), although he, like Picasso, did have some off days. This being a tribute, I'll refrain from discussing SPACE JAM, THE STORY OF US or HOOT, and also the two features Chapman directed: ALL THE RIGHT MOVES and — *ooof!* — THE CLAN OF THE CAVE BEAR. But this is a case in which, thankfully, the good stuff far outweighed the bad.

**I'm done reading. To the website!**

### The Bedlam Files

Visit [The Bedlam Files](#) website. Feel free to share this newsletter as well.

You received this email because you signed up on our website. We hope you enjoy it.



[Unsubscribe](#)