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# THE BEDLAM FILES

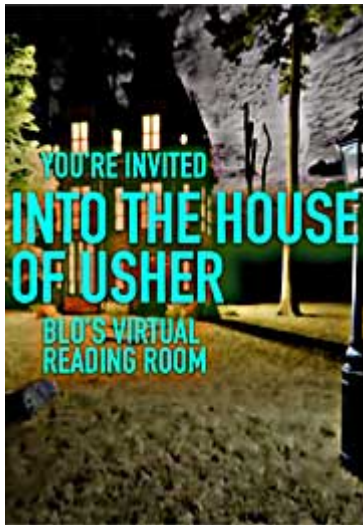
*With Adam Groves*

## The Bedlam Files Quote of the Month

"If you don't go over the top, how are you ever going to see what's on the other side?"

— **Jim Steinman** (RIP)

## Streaming Now



### 1. THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER

The latest in a long line of avant-garde interpretations of Edgar Allan Poe's immortal tale, and of avant-garde film projects from composer Philip Glass. The latter's 1988 opera provided the soundtrack for this **Boston Lyric Opera** created filmic collage, in which the particulars of Poe's tale are conveyed via stop motion animated dolls, along with a great deal of 1950s-era documentary footage and modern TV news clips. Perfect this film isn't, but jazzy and

## Adam's Picks



### 1. THE LAST CIRCUS

For anyone curious about the past filmography of **30 COINS' Alex de la Iglesia**, here's one of his standout works. About an increasingly destructive rivalry between two clowns in a travelling carnival, THE LAST CIRCUS is as demented, grotesque and audacious as anyone could possibly desire, and done up in Iglesia's inimitable manner, *i.e.* as a cartoony yet horrific saga in which love does not conquer all and the good guys don't necessarily win out in the end—although by then it's not too easy sorting out the "good"

imaginative it definitely is.

**BLO.ORG**



## 2. OPERATION VARSITY BLUES: THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS SCANDAL

In which documentarian extraordinaire Chris Smith provides an incisive look at the college admissions scandal that gripped the nation in 2019. The focus is on Rick Singer, the slimy mastermind of a scheme in which wealthy folk shelled out enormous sums of money to get their kids into prestigious colleges. The film's major fascination is in its clear-eyed depiction of how an above-board tutoring gig devolved into an insanely twisted criminal enterprise whose aftereffects are still being felt.

NETFLIX



## 3. 30 COINS

From Spain's demented **Alex de la Iglesia** (of nutzoid classics like ACCION MUTANTE and **THE DAY OF THE BEAST**), a typically unhinged

characters from the bad.

FILM



## 2. VISIONS FROM WITHIN THE MECHANISM By JEFFREY SCOTT

A book showcasing the photographic art of Jeffrey Scott, who specializes in obsessively detailed (each picture on display here reportedly took 50 hours to complete) depictions of beautiful women undergoing biomechanical metamorphoses, with the real and unreal seamlessly married in beautiful and bizarre conjurations. As one critic inquired, "Is this the work of a visual genius or a visionary madman?" Both, I say!

BOOK



## 3. THE AGE OF INSECTS: NOT HUMAN By SPARKY GREENE, LOUIS PIEPER

This four-issue comic book miniseries was presented in magazine sized format with ultra-glossy printing and sumptuous cover art. About a species of human-insect hybrid bent on taking over the Earth, THE AGE OF

horror-comedy series involving a conflicted priest, a remote Spanish village and a cursed coin. At eight episodes (so far) the whole thing feels a bit overly drawn-out, woefully lacking the leanness and kineticism of Iglesia's feature films, but its mixture of knockabout comedy and intense horror works quite well.  
HBO

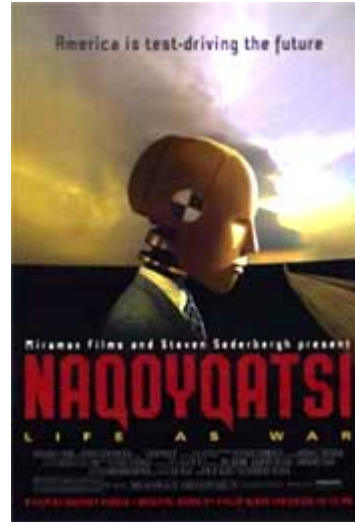


#### 4. STOWAWAY

A most unexpected Netflix sensation: a highly atmospheric but only sporadically compelling outer space drama with Anna Kendrick, Toni Collette and Daniel Dae Kim as cosmonauts on a mission to Mars, and Shamier Anderson as a stowaway on their spaceship who precipitates a most provocative moral dilemma. The cast brings an enormous amount of conviction to material that, frankly, needs it a great deal.  
NETFLIX



INSECTS is unremittingly remarkable from a narrative standpoint, but the astonishingly bold and detailed artwork by Louis Pieper renders it a worthwhile acquisition. This series, FYI, is currently out of print, with its creators having for years claimed that a hardcover compilation is on the way. Where is it?  
BOOK(S)



#### 4. NAQOYQATSI

The third film in director Godfrey Reggio and composer Philip Glass's "Qatsi" trilogy, following the legendary KOYAANISQATSI and POWAQQATSI. As in those films, this one is comprised of a wordless cascade of images set to Glass's highly minimalistic music. The effect is poetic, exhilarating and, frankly, a mite dated (the linked review, FYI, was written back in '02; I no longer feel nearly as enthusiastic about the film as I did back then).  
FILM



## 5. JAKOB'S WIFE

It's great to see that actress **Barbara Crampton**, a longtime horror movie icon, is still active. She plays the dissatisfied wife of a rural minister (Larry Fessenden, who's nearly as strong as Crampton) who after an encounter with a feminine critter becomes a blood-drinking seductress. The results are a mite misconceived and uneven, but I recommend the film, if for no other reason than to see Crampton and Fessenden give what may well be remembered as the performances of their lives.

AMAZON

## 5. JENNIFER'S BODY

A movie that deservedly flopped back in '09, but has for some reason attained an enthusiastic cult following. It's exactly what you'd expect of a horror movie from the writer of JUNO, the director of AEON FLUX and a star who remains best known for her *Maxim* photo spreads. I say it sucks, but maybe I missed something.

FILM

## Also NEW on the Site!

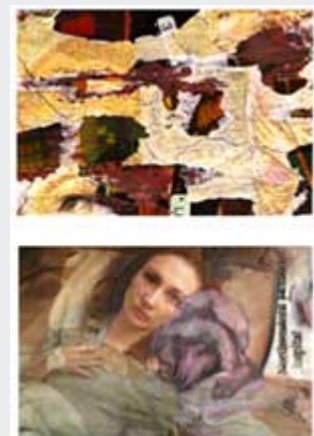
- **The Strange Thing about the Johnsons**
- **Skin**
- **The Messiah**
- **Jan-Michael Vincent: Edge of Greatness**
- **Army of the Dead**
- **The Haunted Dollhouse**
- *And Much More!*



## The Latest Books

Having recommended all these films, here I'll spotlight some books, three of them recently published and the fourth scheduled to bow in August. I'll hopefully review them all at some point in the near future, but here are my early thoughts.

**CRUEL JAWS** by Brad Carter is a **Severin Films published** novelization of the 1995 "film" of the same name. Said film is an unauthorized Italian-made **JAWS** sequel comprised largely of mismatched footage



from the first three JAWS movies and **THE LAST SHARK**, resulting in a concoction that plays just like it sounds. Obviously this novel can't hope to approximate the movie's schizophrenic aura (no book possibly could), and nor does it try to do so. Having read about a third of the book, I can report that it isn't bad at all, reading like a slick updating of the "nasties" cycle of the 1970s and 80s (which included THE RATS, **FERAL** and **the book that started it all**) with generous dollops of gore and sleaze.

They say you can tell a lot about a person by the company he, or in this case *she*, keeps. France's Isabelle Nicou, whose novels **PARESIS** and **GENESIS 0** were recently published in English by **Amphetamine Sulphate**, can be judged by the fact that she's close with Gaspar Noe (in whose 2015 film LOVE Nicou appeared), Dennis Cooper (**who hyped Nicou quite extensively** on his personal blog) and Peter Sotos (who assisted on the English translations of the books in question), a trio that pretty much defines the term *extreme*. Here's the problem: prior to their joint publication in February, PARESIS and GENESIS 0 were heavily promoted by many of my social media colleagues, who demanded everyone read them and made damn sure I got the message, only to fall silent once the books were finally published. I have yet to find a single review of either, nor any plot summaries (outside the claim that these are "novels of erotic abduction"...?). Those aren't what I'd call encouraging signs.

Finally: **ELISEO SUBIELA IN LIFE AND CINEMA** by Nancy J. Membrez is the first-ever English language publication devoted to this criminally underrated Argentine cineaste. There is simply no-one else like Eliseo Subiela, a filmmaker who's equally adept at philosophical sci fi (MAN FACING SOUTHEAST), erotic delirium (THE DARK SIDE OF THE HEART), romantic fantasy (DON'T DIE WITHOUT TELLING ME WHERE YOU'RE GOING) and unclassifiable weirdness (THE ADVENTURES OF GOD). About ELISEO SUBIELA IN LIFE AND CINEMA'S long-overdue arrival, I feel it's great that the book is finally here, but what the hell took so long?

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

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