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THE BEDLAM FILES

With Adam Groves

No Politics

It's November 2020, meaning we're in the midst of a still-raging pandemic, a seemingly never-ending presidential election, biblical weather and civil unrest. Oh yeah: it's also Thanksgiving. Yay.

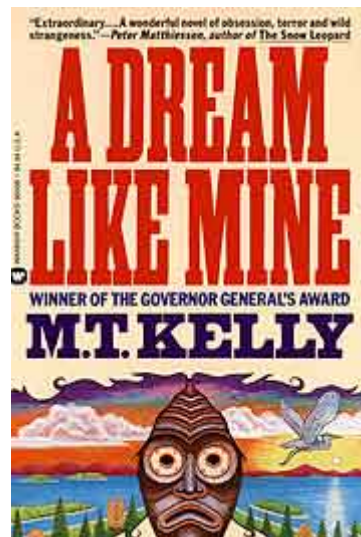
Streaming Now



1. THE QUEEN'S GAMBIT

The major Netflix *success du jour*, and a first-rate example of episodic drama. Its basis was a 1983 Walter Tevis novel whose every nuance writer-director Scott Frank appears to have been determined to capture. Given that the novel in question was one of its talented author's finest, I applaud Frank's fidelity, and the career-making performance of Anya Taylor-Joy as the screen's first and only drug-addicted female chess prodigy. NETFLIX

Adam's Picks



1. A DREAM LIKE MINE by K.T. KELLY

A perfect book for Thanksgiving, even if it does hail from Canada rather than the US. Canada's history with its indigenous population, let's not forget, is as fraught as that of its "bratty little brother," and fully owned up to in this alternately gritty and hallucinatory thriller. It involves a white reporter stationed in a Native American--or First Nations--reservation, where an environmentally-minded warrior and a sorcerer reside.

BOOK



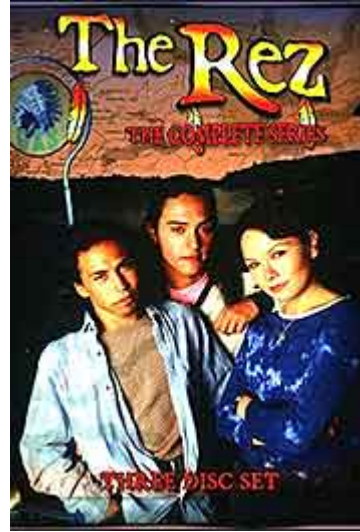
2. CREATURES OF MADNESS

According to Christian Szczerba, the fifteen(!) year old creator of this ten minute short, it's "*some kind of lovecraftian cosmic horror, a descent into madness to sum up. Nothing out of the ordinary.*" I beg to differ, as ordinary CREATURES OF MADNESS most definitely isn't, being a hallucinatory mood piece pulled off with a skill and assurance that bely Szczerba's age and current industry status. He may not have an imdb page at present, but you *will* be hearing more from this guy, that I guarantee. YOUTUBE



3. CREEPSHOW ANIMATED SPECIAL

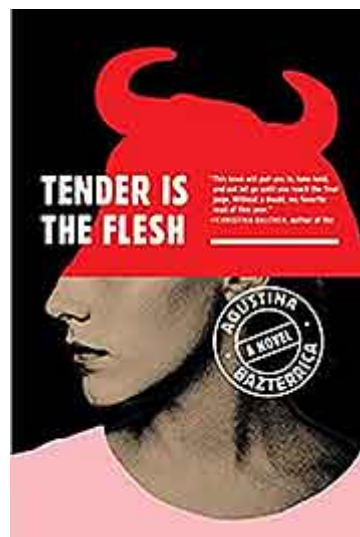
First up in this 47 minute anthology two-parter is a dramatization of Stephen King's infamous tale "Survivor Type." It's about a surgeon stranded on a remote island who, when starvation inevitably becomes apparent, amputates parts of his



2. THE REZ

Another First Nations themed work, this is a short-lived but potent 1996 TV show from filmmaker Bruce MacDonald (spinning off his 1994 film DANCE ME OUTSIDE) about young indigenous folk residing on a Canadian reservation. A funny, perceptive and absorbing program that deserved far more than the measly two seasons it got.

TV SERIES



3. TENDER IS THE FLESH By AGUSTINA BAXTERRICA

An ideal choice for a season marked by overindulgence: a literary horror novel about a future world in which human flesh is harvested for food. That's a metaphor, obviously, for modern man's self-destructive tendencies, but author Agustina Baxterrera does an admirably thorough, non-satiric job constructing

body and eats 'em! Kiefer Sutherland provides a highly dramatic monologue over rotoscoped animation that is, frankly, a bit on the cheap side. The same is true of "Twittering from the Circus of the Dead," based on a story by King's son, Joe Hill. Here Joey King (no relation to Steve or Joe) voices the smart-assed tweets of a teenage girl attending a zombie carnival. The segment is much funnier, and gorier, than its predecessor, and while neither is exceptional, both are undeniably affecting. SHUDDER



4. MY OCTOPUS TEACHER

Another Netflix sensation, this one a documentary about diver Craig Foster's friendship with an African octopus. It plays like essentially what it is: the quirkiest nature doco ever, with info about the octopus's habits and genetic make-up juxtaposed with Foster's personal recollections. The film isn't terribly exciting from a formal standpoint, cutting back and forth between Foster seated at a table while talking to the camera and his underwater footage, but it is oddly compelling. NETFLIX

this dystopia, and doesn't skimp on the grue.

BOOK



4. THE FOLKS AT RED WOLF INN

More cannibalism: at the eponymous beachfront inn guests have an unfortunate tendency to disappear, and those that remain are served strange cuts of meat. A surprisingly tasteful film given the subject matter, pulled off with a great deal of visual panache and a sense of humor that's actually funny. (It's certainly the only movie I've ever seen whose end credits are presented in the form of a menu.)

FILM



5. INVASION OF THE SPACE INVADERS By MARTIN AMIS

An exuberant 1982 celebration of coin-operated video games, written by,



unexpectedly enough, the snootier-than-thou British novelist Martin Amis (who when asked about the book nowadays is said to respond with a “dismissive scowl”). How does this relate to Thanksgiving? I have no idea, but the book is a nostalgic blast for those of us who remember the eighties. BOOK

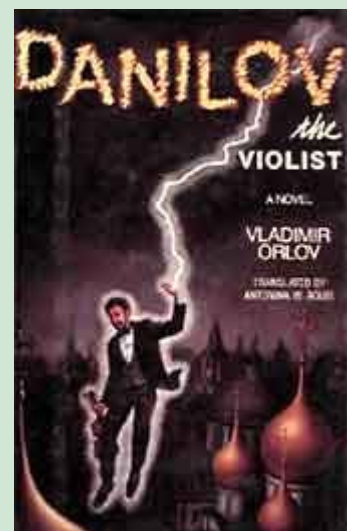
5. **AWAY**

I’ll confess I gave up on this just-cancelled sci-fi series after three episodes, but the pilot is worth watching. It was directed and executive produced by Ed Zwick, the creator of **THIRTYSOMETHING**, and if you’ve ever wondered how **THIRTYSOMETHING IN SPACE** might play, here’s the answer. Hilary Swank headlines as a cosmonaut attempting to juggle familial angst while on a trip to Mars (with the most memorable scene featuring Swank on her cell phone, informing an earthbound hospital orderly that “I’m calling from the moon!”). It’s not great by any means, but it is quite unique (as opposed to the later episodes, which are awash in space movie clichés). NETFLIX



Also NEW on the Site!

- **Soy Leyenda**
- **Danilov the Violinist**
- **Pomegranate and the Devouring Insects**
- **Bad Boy Bubby**
- *And Much More!*



INSIDER NOTES

Here's something to be thankful for: according to a [recent news report](#) 2020 has seen a distinct increase in DVD/Blu-ray sales. This, of course, follows [dispiriting reports](#) from last year about the "Death of DVDs."



Whether this is just a covid-era anomaly or the start of a long-term trend I don't know, but I say the DVD sales resurgence is a good thing because:

- a) You can never have enough DVDs and/or blu-rays (this from one who probably has far too many of both!),
- b) DVD/blu-rays are exempt from the obnoxious restrictions, copyright-related and otherwise, that tend to plague streaming platforms (as when Netflix was [forced to give up FRIENDS](#) when its licensing agreement ran out and HBO Max [briefly withdraw](#) GONE WITH THE WIND due to controversy),
- c) You can watch them any time you want, and needn't worry about an internet connection or monthly subscription fee, and
- d) They're exempt from the obnoxious upgrades and format changes that make online content such a constant pain in the you-know-what.

That last point, of course, is one that can be used to promote *all* physical media, which is something I grew up with, and is something of which I feel we can all do with (much) more.

I'm done reading. To the website!

The Bedlam Files

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