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# THE BEDLAM FILES

*With Adam Groves*

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“I've worked hard enough and earned enough to fail for the rest of my life.  
And I'm gonna do it!!”

—George Lucas

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## Streaming Now

### 1. **DAZED AND CONFUSED**



This 1993 classic was the second feature by Richard Linklater, and the first entry in his autobiographical trilogy. It was followed by *BOYHOOD* (2014), which explored his childhood, and *EVERYBODY WANTS SOME!!* (2016), about his college years. *DAZED AND CONFUSED*'s focus was Linklater's adolescence, in the form of a slice-of-life depiction of several Austin teenagers on the last day of high school in June of 1976. There's no real story to speak of, with clear-eyed observation and unflinching honesty being the film's greatest assets, and performances so natural and

## Adam's Picks

### 1. **70s MONSTER MEMORIES** edited by ERIC McNAUGHTON



Until very recently this must-own book was impossible to find, and ungodly expensive if you managed to do so (as I can personally attest). Now it's available in kindle format, which can't hope to replicate the original retina-searing physical publication but is better than nothing. A product of the UK's *WE BELONG DEAD* magazine, *70s MONSTER MEMORIES* explores horror media of the 1970s from the POVs of the “monster kids” who came of age with it. Thus a heartfelt personal dimension is added to an already

unaffected I find it impossible to think of the cast as actors playing parts, despite the fact that this film introduced us to performers like Ben Affleck, Matthew McCaughey, Parker Posey, Joey Lauren Adams, Jason London, and Adam Goldberg.

AMAZON

## 2. **SORGOI PRAKOV**



Somehow this ten-year-old mind-roaster, a cult film in Europe, has flown under my radar. I'm glad I finally caught up with it, though, because it's one of the most masterful and provocative examples of found footage horror I've seen. Furthermore, SORGOI PRAKOV feels remarkably contemporary despite its age; in fact, I'd say its premise, involving a nerdy Paris-based documentarian (Rafael Cherkaski, also the writer-director) descending into unimaginable insanity, is more relevant now than it was in 2013.

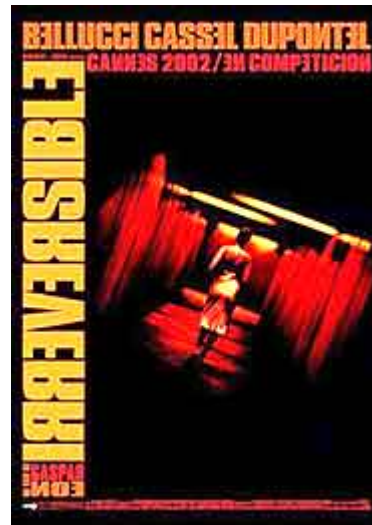
AMAZON

## 3. **JACK BE NIMBLE**

irresistible package, with design that can only be described as eye-popping.

BOOK

## 2. **IRREVERSIBLE**



A new cut of this blistering 2002 classic, entitled IRREVERSIBLE: STRAIGHT CUT, is currently blighting movie theaters throughout America, in which the reverse chronology so effectively employed in the film's first and definitive version is made linear. Pfooy! I strongly advise tracking down that earlier version, as it's one the key films of France's Gaspar Noe, and one of the most unrelenting freak-outs of our time. The subject: a brutal rape, followed by an even more brutal act of revenge in a gay nightclub. It sounds, and is, plenty nasty, but by beginning at the end and concluding at the beginning Noe creates a paradoxically uplifting film that takes us from the darkest depths of human ugliness to a pinnacle of transcendent beauty.

FILM

## 3. **LOST HIGHWAY**



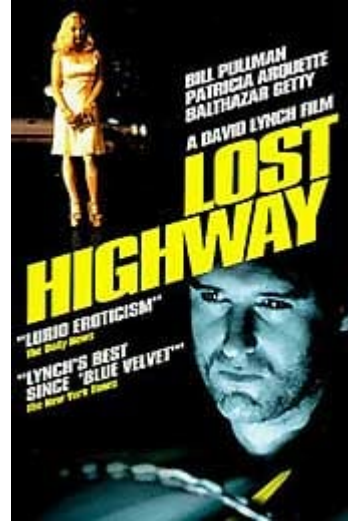
I may have overrated this 1993 New Zealand import in my 20-plus year old review, but JACK BE NIMBLE has much to recommend. It stars the late Alexis Arquette as a troubled (and admittedly unlikeable) character on a search for his biological parents, contending all the while with a psychically-endowed sister (Sarah Smuts-Kennedy), a hypnosis machine and a quartet of psychotic siblings hailing from Arquette's adopted family. An exciting, fast-paced and gory film with a core of genuine anguish, and a refined sensibility that nearly places it in arthouse territory.

SHUDDER

#### 4. EYE FOR AN EYE



The gifted John Schlesinger, of **MIDNIGHT COWBOY** (1969) and **THE DAY OF THE LOCUST** (1975), was tasked with directing this 1996 Hollywood trash-fest, which explains its ultra-slick A-movie veneer. It also contains a highly auspicious cast—Sally Field, Ed Harris, Kiefer



The final role of the late Robert Blake was in this, one of the most David Lynchian David Lynch films ever. It's not among Lynch's best work, lacking the leanness of **ERASERHEAD**, the accessibility of **BLUE VELVET** and the compulsive watchability of **MULHOLLAND DRIVE**. But **LOST HIGHWAY** registers as solid second-tier Lynch, with much immaculately crafted weirdness, a striking turn by Blake, and a confounding narrative that's best summed up by the four lines prefacing the screenplay: "A 21st Century Noir Horror Film...A graphic investigation into parallel identity crises...A world where time is dangerously out of control...A terrifying ride down the lost highway."

FILM

#### 4. SPANKY By CHRISTOPHER FOWLER



The March 3 demise of the British horror-mystery novelist Christopher

Sutherland, Beverly D'Angelo, Joe Montegna—enacting a reactionary account of a contented woman (Field) whose young daughter is raped and killed by a scumbag ex-con (Sutherland). What is Sally to do? Take self-defense classes and join an underground vigilante group, of course, so she can get her revenge. No, there's nothing too deep or profound here, but the film is extremely watchable, and it's great fun seeing the Flying Nun headline a violent right-wing fantasy (her second, following 1990's even more outrageous NOT WITHOUT MY DAUGHTER).

AMAZON

### 5. **MONEY SHOT: THE PORNHUB STORY**



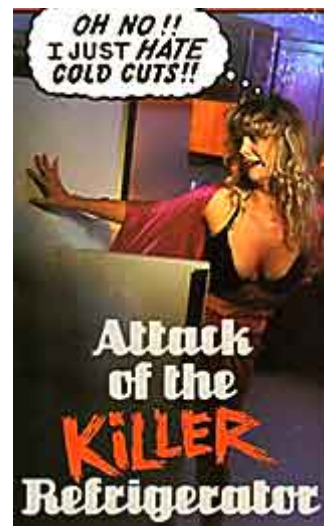
A disappointing documentary, but a necessary one. The subject is the Canadian website Pornhub, which was in large part responsible for a shift in the nature of pornography, taking it from an industry that largely stayed in the shadows to the quasi-mainstream enterprise it's become. If you ask me, the makers of this doco should have given that historical aspect more prominence, but they focus largely on Pornhub's legal troubles, and in so doing indulge what is arguably the single most obnoxious journalistic technique of the modern age: using random screen grabs from Twitter to represent "the public."

NETFLIX

Fowler put an untimely end to a distinguished and extremely prolific writing career. Here's one of his more interesting early books, an audacious nineties-centric updating of the Faust story in which the lowly furniture store employee Martyn meets Spanky, a self-professed daemon (repeat: daemon, not demon!) who for once doesn't want to snatch its target's immortal soul; rather, Spanky seeks to take over Martyn's body in order to commit dastardly acts. SPANKY is a satisfying read that will never overshadow the works of Goethe or Christopher Marlowe, but delivers the pulpy goods.

BOOK

### 5. **ATTACK OF THE KILLER REFRIGERATOR**



In the category of Psycho Fridge movies this 1984 short (which recently made its Blu-ray debut) isn't the best example, but it was the first one out of the gate. Budgeted at a reported \$25—yes, twenty five dollars—it's a fifteen minute shot-on-video cheese fest about a sentient refrigerator that becomes quite pissed after some college twerps abuse it, and enacts an extremely bloody revenge. That the film received any attention at all is remarkable, but it did, making a minor splash on the 1980s VHS circuit.

FILM

## Also New

- **LET ME GO (THE RIGHT WAY)** (Film)
- **BLACK HOLE** (Graphic Novel)
- **VIC, BLOOD, AND HARLAN** (Commentary)
- **ESCAPE FROM L. A.** (Film)
- **HIDEOUS!** (Film)
- **THE SHARK IS ROARING: THE STORY OF JAWS - THE REVENGE** (Commentary)
- **Archived eblasts for easy reference**
- ***And Much More!***



## Insider Info

With all the **drama currently roiling Disney**, STAR WARS, and its Disney-owned parent company Lucasfilm, are back in the news. Drama is indeed



the word for what's been occurring at Lucasfilm, which has been rocked by the **jettisoning of several high-profile projects**, the **possible firing of its head Kathleen Kennedy** and, most startling of all, the possibility that STAR WARS' creator George Lucas, who sold Lucasfilm to the Mouse Factory back in 2012, **wants back in**.

Yes, this is the same George Lucas who not too long ago **swore off STAR WARS**. Referring to the less-than-effusive reaction to his STAR WARS prequel trilogy, he lamented "Why would I make any more when everybody yells at you all the time and says what a terrible person you are?" Regarding his future plans, he stated that "I'm finishing all my obligations and I'm going to retire to my garage with my saw and hammer and build hobby movies."

This particular instance wasn't the first time Lucas tried to unshackle himself from STAR WARS. Back in 1986, three years after the release of RETURN OF THE JEDI, Lucas formally ended the official STAR WARS Fan Club; specifically, he renamed it the Lucasfilm Fan Club, an indirect but decisive declaration that he wanted to move on from his most famous, and commercially viable, creation. This was a filmmaker, let's not forget, who in his

early days repudiated commercial cinema with the line “Emotionally involving the audience is easy...get a little kitten and have some guy wring its neck.” Yet in 1999 Lucas was back with another STAR WARS movie.

In his 1997 Hollywood history *EASY RIDERS, RAGING BULLS*, author Peter Biskind concluded his profile of Lucas’s showbiz tenure with the observation that he was “reconciled to spending the rest of his life churning out STAR WARS prequels.”

Elaborating on that point, Biskind wrote:

“When Darth Vader begs Luke to serve the Empire and join the Dark Side at the end of *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*, saying ‘It’s your destiny,’ Luke defies him, taking a risky plunge into nowhere. But real life is different. When Lucas’s self-created empire begged the producer-director to serve it, he gave in. ‘It took a long time for me to adjust to STAR WARS,’ he says, bemusedly. ‘I finally did, and I’m going back to it. STAR WARS is my destiny.’”

Back in 1997 Biskind’s view of George Lucas as the Ancient Mariner, driven by an implacable destiny (and the desire to make money), made sense. Now, after having broken with and (apparently) returned to STAR WARS yet again, Lucas seems more like a battered wife, stuck in a toxic relationship from which he can’t seem to break free. The man is now 78, so it’s unrealistic to expect things to change, either in Lucas’s relationship to his creation or audiences’ reactions to it. One thing, however, is certain: if George Lucas does indeed return to the STAR WARS fold he can’t possibly screw up the saga any more than Disney already has.

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Adam's recommendations organized by  
year/month in the ***NEWSLETTER ARCHIVE***.



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