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THE BEDLAM FILES

With Adam Groves

“I hope that in this year to come, you make mistakes. Because if you are making mistakes, then you are making new things, trying new things, learning, living, pushing yourself, changing yourself, changing your world. You're doing things you've never done before, and more importantly, you're Doing Something.”

—Neil Gaiman

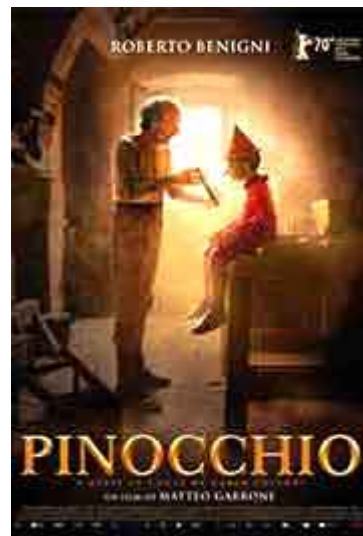
Streaming Now



1. THE DOORS

I say this is one of Oliver Stone's best movies, even if THE DOORS, an ostensible 1991 biopic about the late Jim Morrison, ultimately offers more insight into its maker than its subject. Val Kilmer, in a career-best performance, plays Morrison, who's portrayed as a brilliant but hopelessly self-destructive Dionysian figure, with the film offering something you won't see in too many other Hollywood biopics then or now: an unabashedly

Adam's Picks



1. PINOCCHIO

This 2019 live actioner sought to adapt Carlo Collodi's immortal ADVENTURES OF PINOCCHIO in its original, un-Disneyfied form. Hailing from Italy (Pinocchio's true birthplace), it's as faithful an adaptation as possible, meaning the title character is an irrepressible troublemaker who in the course of the highly episodic narrative gets burned, hung and imprisoned. The production, in any event, is a

pro-drug, excess-happy stance. Again, though, the viewpoint is entirely that of Oliver Stone, one of the very few people whose ego eclipses that of Jim Morrison.

AMAZON PRIME



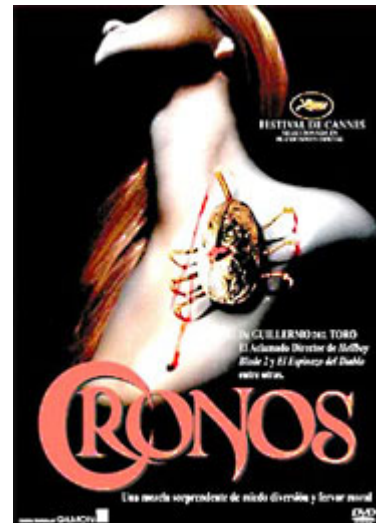
2. EMILY THE CRIMINAL

I fully believe that, if only she weren't so weird, Aubrey Plaza would have the career of Anne Hathaway or Jennifer Lawrence. That's proven quite adequately in EMILY THE CRIMINAL, a scrappy indie crime drama dominated by Miss Plaza in the title role. She plays a reckless young woman who gets involved with a crime syndicate, and finds herself a disturbingly proficient criminal. The film suffers from a lax attitude toward plausibility, with bad guys who behave in an abominably stupid manner (such as robbing Emily and then loitering outside her apartment, thus allowing her ample time to get back at them). Aubrey P.'s performance, however, cannot be faulted, having been pulled off without the distracting quirks—deadpan line readings, neutral expressions, etc.—upon which she usually relies.

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handsome and stately one, with a painstakingly achieved sense of earthy realism that serves to enhance the tale's underlying strangeness.

FILM



2. CRONOS

A chance to see Mexico's Guillermo Del Toro, who's now pretty much an institution unto himself, at the earliest stage of his career. 1993's CRONOS, made by Del Toro at age 28, was allegedly the most expensive Mexican film ever made at the time, and contained some top-flight talent both in front of and behind the camera. It offers a bold and ingenious variation on vampire mythology, with a mechanical contraption housing an insect whose sting, through the machinations of the device, confers immortality upon its human victims—but with a very steep price. Viewers of Guillermo Del Toro's later films will recognize many of their elements in embryonic form: an overriding affinity for the grotesque, a fascination with childhood wonder and trauma, a gorgeously baroque visual style and a thorough knowledge of genre lore past and present.

FILM



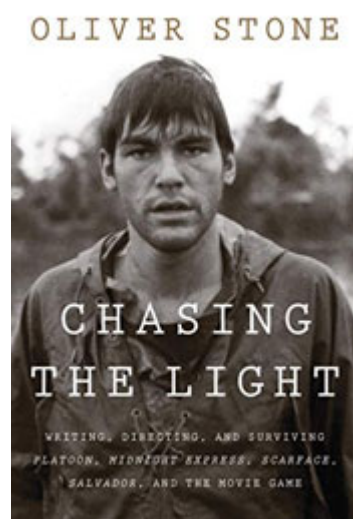
3. TRUE HOME ALONE HORROR STORIES ANIMATED

From our friends at [Horror Shorts Party](#), here's a new batch of "true" horror cartoons done up in the standard HSP animation style, with big eyed (or eyeless) personages sporting massive toothy mouths. The subject: being left home alone as a youngster a la the classic [1990 film of that name](#). The first and best part is set in an apartment complex, where a teenage girl whose father is away learns, horrifyingly, that she's not actually home alone. In part two a kid in a house located next to a penitentiary is menaced by a psychotic escaped con, and part three, which is closest to the HOME ALONE we all know, has a kid home alone on Christmas Eve as two robbers break in. Be advised that the segment concludes a bit differently than the flick, which was played for laughs—something these stories definitely aren't.

YOUTUBE



4. GUILLERMO DEL TORO'S PINOCCHIO



3. CHASING THE LIGHT by OLIVER STONE

Speaking as one who quite literally grew up watching Oliver Stone's films, I couldn't help but gravitate toward this long-in-coming 2020 memoir. Stone may have fallen silent in recent years (his last non-documentary film was in 2016) but his storytelling instincts remain quite sharp, and this book may not contain much information that can't also be found in James Riordan's 1995 biography STONE (from which CHASING THE LIGHT extensively quotes), but it's worth experiencing Oliver Stone's life story from the man's own highly individual perspective. My one major issue with this book: it only covers Stone's existence up to 1987, with the remainder saved for what I hope is an upcoming volume.

BOOK



4. GAME OVER

Those calling it a masterpiece are way off, but this Guillermo Del Toro shepherded PINOCCHIO adaptation deserves points for reviving the lost art of handcrafted stop motion animation. Aimed at both children and adults, and fairly horrific in nature, the pic contains moments of genuine wonder, some scary stuff, and several obnoxiously cutesy elements that belong in another movie. It is, at least, leagues better than the Tom Hanks-Robert Zemeckis PINOCCHIO that back in September stunk up Disney Plus.

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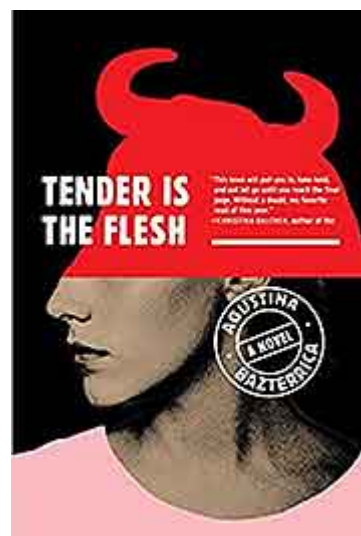
5. **DON'T PICK UP THE PHONE**

A three-part docuseries about the prank calls made to fast food restaurants in the southern US during the years 1994-2004, in which an alleged police officer impelled managers to strip search and sexually assault their (mostly female) employees. A portion of the case was dramatized in the 2012 indie **COMPLIANCE**, but this series tells the whole twisted story, with testimony from several women who were victimized, as well as one of the offending managers, and also the dogged cops who tracked down the (alleged) perpetrator. Undeniably compelling, although, as tends to be the case with most docuseries, it's too drawn-out for its own good (three episodes being two too many).

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With all the recent talk (by me) about HOME ALONE, here's an interesting (if unexceptional) French language corollary: a perverse thriller, released a year prior to HOME ALONE, about a young boy who's (nearly) home alone on Christmas, and finds himself having to fight off an intruder. In GAME OVER the material isn't played for yucks, with the kid a Rambo obsessed brat and the intruder a pervert dressed as Santa Claus who kills a dog and perpetrates some upsetting violence.

FILM

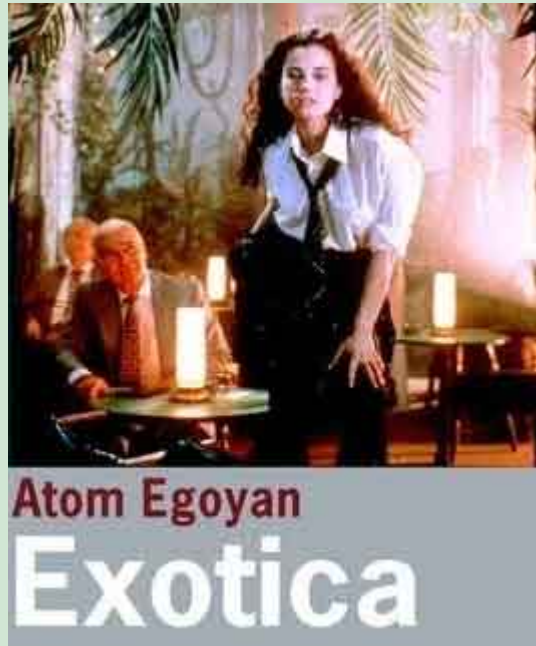


5. **TENDER IS THE FLESH** by **AGUSTINA BAZTERRICA**

A Spanish import that hits most of the literary horror bases: it features a sensitive, angst-ridden protagonist and present-tense prose that's often downright obnoxious in its "artful" introspection. TENDER IS THE FLESH, however, is still a must-read due to its concept: a future world where a mysterious disease has wiped out nearly all animal life, resulting in the mass harvesting of human flesh for food—a metaphor, obviously, for modern man's self-destructive tendencies, but author Agustina Bazterrica does a thorough, non-satiric job constructing this dystopia. The novel is also, at 179 pages, quite short, one area in which the literary label (as opposed to the bloated bestseller one) actually works to its advantage.

Also NEW on the Site!

- **The Wolfman** (Film)
- **Trollhunter** (Film)
- **Cannibal Holocaust and the Savage Cinema of Ruggero Deodato** (Nonfiction)
- **Ruggero Deodato: 1939-2022** (Commentary)
- **Zachariah** (Film)
- **Archived eblasts for easy reference**
- **And Much More!**



Insider Info

2023 is upon us. Here, rather than picking over the past twelve months (which I'll be doing elsewhere), I'll take a look forward at select entertainment industry trends that are certain to shape the upcoming year, such as...



Layoffs A'Plenty

I'm not sure how seriously to take the claims I've been hearing about imminent economic catastrophe (I can recall reading back in June that "within two months" we'd all be living in **MAD MAX** land), but I can say with some certainty that, given the state of the economy, the mass layoffs plaguing the media landscape won't be stopping any time soon. This means that if you're working in the industry, you'd best strap yourself in, as it's going to be a rough ride.

Brick-and-Mortar Bookselling: The Revenge

Here's something I wasn't expecting: Barnes and Noble, which it seemed was on its last legs, is making a comeback. Due to "**pandemic tailwinds**" that have bolstered its confidence and

income, Barnes will be opening 30 new US stores in '23, including two in recently shuttered Amazon Books Boston area locations

Amazon is of course Barnes' major competitor, and, in light of a string of underperforming "zombie" stores, is seeing its retail footprint shrink appreciably.

Dawn of the Depp

Get ready: 2023 has been officially designated the year of Johnny Depp's Hollywood comeback. This is something that was in the works prior to his defamation trial against Amber Heard, whose outcome (based on what I hear tell) was predicted long in advance by Tinseltown's gatekeepers. Whether Depp elects to go along with this planned comeback is another matter—he's reportedly **rebuffed Disney's attempts at recruiting him for another PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN sequel**, so all bets may be off.

Disney Dejection

Disney's 2022 woes have been well documented, and it doesn't look as if they'll be lessening in '23. The company's theme parks and accompanying merchandizing provide a steady source of income, but over the past year some high-profile movie flops, combined with the underperformance of Disney Plus and executive shuffling, have put a serious dent in the mouse factory's fortunes.

Let's look on the bright side, though: Lucasfilm's controversial CEO Kathleen Kennedy is allegedly set to be ushered out in 2023 (and replaced with—no joke—Ron Howard) and Gina Carano, who was famously fired from THE MANDELORIAN for her political views, is said to be the object of a planned Johnny-Depp-like reconciliation by Disney.

R.I.P. Wokeness

I'm sorry to disappoint you fans of what's commonly termed woke media, but it's on its way out. This is due not to a sudden change of heart on the part of Hollywood, but simple economics: the "woke" media offered up in 2022—THE 355, MS.MARVEL, LIGHTYEAR, BROS, STRANGE WORLD, SHE-HULK, ARMAGEDDON TIME, SHE SAID, WOMEN TALKING, etc.—has failed on a massive scale, while the year's top-grossing film was the decidedly non-woke TOP GUN: MAVERICK.

Many a public excuse has been offered up for all the filmic failure (such as "the pandemic"), but trust me: Hollywood's executives

know damn well why their product has been losing money, and have already taken steps to alleviate those losses. Warner Bros.CEO David Zaslav recently scrapped his studio's \$90 million production BATGIRL, **allegedly because it was "too woke,"** while even Disney is making an effort to reign in the divisive political content (see the last sentence of the preceding entry).Whether this will result in better movies remains to be seen.

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



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The Bedlam Files, 12-2022

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