

JULY 2024 | Just take me to the website, please.

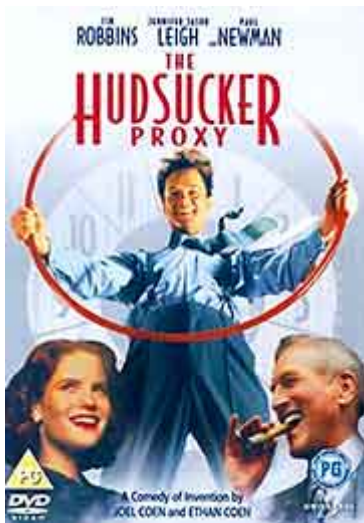
THE BEDLAM FILES

With Adam Groves

“God and Country are an unbeatable team;
they break all records for oppression and bloodshed.”

— Luis Buñuel

Streaming Now



1. THE HUDSUCKER PROXY

The very definition of a Hollywood “feathered fish,” meaning a fish, or movie, that can neither swim nor fly. THE HUDSUCKER PROXY was a big budget Coen Brothers movie whose glossy overlay turned off Coen fans, while the weirdness of the film, which blends Preston Sturges inspired comedy with magical realism, repelled most everyone else. The weirdness, of course, is what I most appreciated, in addition to the fact that the sense of humor on display is actually funny (not always the case with the Coens, as anyone who’s sat through THE MAN WHO WASN’T

Adam's Picks



1. DON'T LOOK NOW

A now fifty-year-old film that’s **become an unexpected streaming hit** due, apparently, to the recent death of its star **Donald Sutherland**. He plays one half of a married couple —Julie Christie is the other—on a business trip in Venice. Strangeness quickly becomes apparent, enhanced by the fractured, time-tripping editing of director **Nicolas Roeg** (Sutherland, FYI, named one of his children Roeg) and thoroughly unpredictable story dreamt up by the great Daphne Du Maurier, which contains one of cinema’s most authentically shocking final reveals (as well as one of the

THERE or THE LADYKILLERS well knows).

NETFLIX



2. VANISHED INTO THE NIGHT

An Italian Netflix movie that isn't bad at all. It's not exceptional (that, it seems, would be asking too much from a Netflix production), but **VANISHED INTO THE NIGHT** held my attention and contains some effective twists. It's about a divorced man (Riccardo Scamarcio) whose two young children inexplicably disappear on his watch, forcing him to smuggle cocaine(!) for a scumbag friend but of course not all is as it seems. Reasonably well made by director Renato De Maria, and reasonably well acted by Scamarcio, and if you want more than "reasonably well" accomplishments you'll have to look elsewhere.

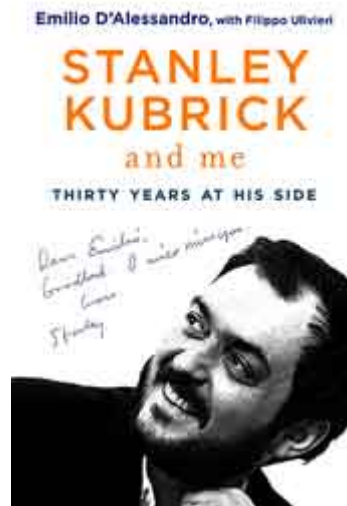
NETFLIX



3. BABY FEVER

greatest non-pornographic movie sex scenes).

FILM



2. STANLEY KUBRICK AND ME

Prior to the publication of Robert P. Kolker and Nathan Abrams' **KUBRICK: AN ODYSSEY**, this 2012 memoir was the finest biographical portrait of the late Stanley Kubrick. Offered is a blunt yet affectionate portrait of the great man by his longtime assistant Emilio D'Alessandro, who views his boss not as the hermetic weirdo the media likes to portray but a kind-hearted fellow with an inexhaustible work ethic. Juicy tidbits? Sorry, but outside the revelation that Jack Nicholson was as nutty off-screen during the filming of **THE SHINING** as he was on, there aren't too many.

BOOK



3. HEAVEN CAN HELP

Up until a few years ago this was a lost film. Then one of its cast members posted **HEAVEN CAN HELP** (1989) on

A 25-minute elaboration on the ever-popular mutant birth trope. There's nothing especially novel to be found in this account of a teenage girl (Helena Berens) discovering she's been impregnated, and that the resulting birth will be far from normal. But the film is well made (if a bit too brightly lit for my tastes) and contains some striking critters that, in the irresistible climax, run riot at a high school prom.

YOUTUBE



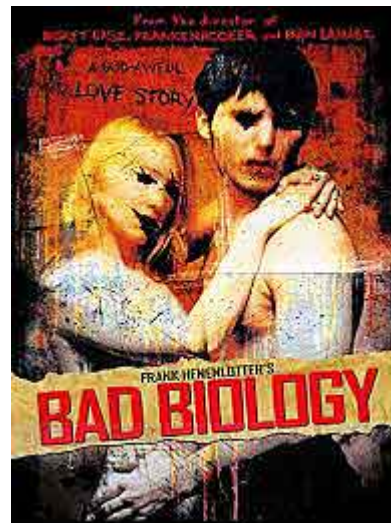
4. COBRA KAI (season 6.1)

I haven't been too impressed with the last three seasons of this KARATE KID spinoff series but have stuck with it. Season six doesn't improve matters appreciably, but it is at least concise; this is the show's final season, which lends a newfound urgency. It is, FYI, an example of Netflix's new strategy of dropping its series in parts rather than all at once, being the first half of season six (the second is scheduled to screen in November) and concluding with one of the series' better cliffhangers.

NETFLIX

YouTube, and it can now take its rightful place as a bad movie anti-classic. A film that involves God (who takes the form of an old guy playing cards in a smoky mansion), Satan (a suit wearing sleaze with long-assed fingernails) and a young woman angel (who favors mini-dresses and high heels), HEAVEN CAN HELP tries (and fails) to mix theological speculation and B-movie thrills, all in service of a resolutely earnest and reverential presentation of theological sap.

FILM



4. BAD BIOLOGY

Recently released in 4K, this Frank Henenlotter outrage is silly, immature and in questionable taste, but succeeds due to a core concept so ingeniously warped it compels attention, and the presence of some appealing old school special effects. It's the wildest of Henenlotter's films (no small claim!) and certainly the finest "woman with an overactive vagina meeting a guy with a mutant penis" movie ever made.

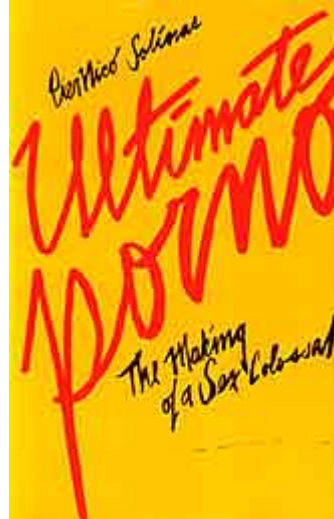
FILM



5. TICKLED

A true crime docudrama masquerading as an alt-culture expose. Competitive tickling is certainly one of weirder subcultures on record, and this 2016 film examines its every permutation. The focus, however, is on a rich lunatic with a tickling fetish who badgers naïve young men into competing in online tickle tournaments and then subjects them to bullying and harassment which he also does to journalist David Farrier, who co-directed this film. This tickle fetishist, in other words, was a forerunner of today's cancel culture loons, and TICKLED offers a potent x-ray of that subculture and its discontents.

NETFLIX



5. ULTIMATE PORNO: THE MAKING OF A SEX COLOSSAL

With the release of a newly edited version of the notorious **CALIGULA** (1979) almost upon us, here's a highly idiosyncratic account of its inception. The author was Pier Nico Solinas, the first assistant director of CALIGULA, who offers first-hand knowledge of its tumultuous 1976 shoot. Of course, this account only covers part of the CALIGULA saga (which stretched on for three years after filming was completed), but Solinas's experiences were eventful enough to fill three books, describing a Hieronymus Boschian cavalcade of depravity set amid some of the most elaborate film sets ever constructed.

BOOK

Also New

- **ROBERT TOWNE: 1934-2024** (Commentary)
- **OMNI'S SCREEN FLIGHTS SCREEN FANTASIES** (Nonfiction)
- **THE EMBALMER** (Film)
- **FEAR AND DESIRE** (Film)
- **SALUTING THE BLOOD OF HEROES: BEHIND THE APOCALYPTIC FILM** (Nonfiction)
- **THE OBSCENE BIRD OF NIGHT** (Fiction)



- **NIGHT OF DELUSIONS** (Fiction)
- **SHELLEY DUVALL: 1949-2024** (Commentary)
- **Archived newsletters for easy reference**
- ***And Much More!***

Insider Info

Back in 1961, **Luis Buñuel** scandalized the film world with his Spanish art film **VIRIDIANA**. Buñuel was an old school surrealist who maintained the troublemaking surrealist proclivity throughout his life. **VIRIDIANA** embodied that inclination in its depiction of miscreants and slobs engaged in an overtly blasphemous parody of **Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper,"** to which Buñuel devoted a freeze frame. An unholy outcry resulted, with the film declared blasphemous by the Vatican and banned for over a decade in Spain.



What I find most interesting about the **VIRIDIANA** saga is that the film was not an underground provocation, but a mainstream production made with the full cooperation of Spanish authorities. Buñuel went through all the necessary channels and made all the recommended script changes (which included jettisoning his original ending in favor of an even more subversive fade-out).

Fast forward to right now, in which we find ourselves in the midst of another controversy involving da Vinci's immortal painting. As I'm sure you're aware, the furor revolves around **the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics**, which was evidently conceived with Buñuelian surrealistic principles in mind.

Highlights of that ceremony, put together by the French theater artist **Thomas Jolly**, included the severed head of Marie Antoinette singing heavy metal tunes, a bullet-riddled Statue of Liberty and that now-infamous mockery of "The Last Supper" (it's been claimed the depiction was actually the **Feast of Dionysus**, but I don't buy it) in which the twelve apostles were replaced with drag queens.



Reaction to the depiction has been similar to that which greeted Buñuel's film. Cries of "blasphemy!" have been frequent, and the International Olympic Committee, while not explicitly banning the ceremony, has **yanked videos of its more outrageous portions from YouTube**, and reportedly copyright claimed channels who've tried to replay them.

It's wrong to equate Thomas Jolly with Luis Buñuel, but Jolly clearly shares the maestro's gift for placating authorities. As with VIRIDIANA, the Olympics Opening ceremony had to jump through many an official hoop on its way to fruition, and Jolly, based on the interviews he's given, uses all the right buzzwords in making his case: "I wanted a ceremony that brings people together, that reconciles..." "I have the impression of floating on a cloud of tolerance, love and shared joy..."

In both cases I'd say it's not Christians, Leonardo da Vinci or the twelve apostles who were made to look silly, but the authorities who sanctioned these outrageous spectacles, and then attempted to erase them once they materialized. Such stupidity can only come from official channels, who've proven that the more things change...



Check out Adam's recommendations in the **NEWSLETTER ARCHIVE**.

I'm done reading. To the website!

The Bedlam Files, July 2024

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