

SEPT/OCT 2024 | Just take me to the website, please.

THE BEDLAM FILES

With Adam Groves

“When everybody plays, we all win.”

— Phil Spencer

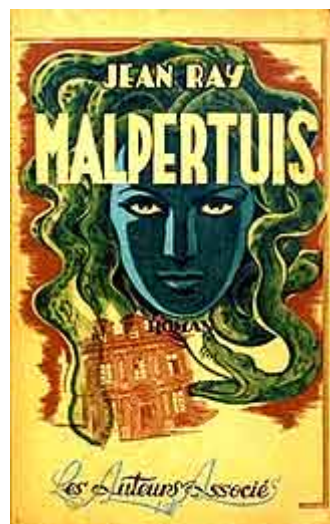
Streaming Now



1. ELECTION

After THE CANDIDATE (1972), this 1999 Alexander Payne production is the best film ever made about the American electoral process. Lying, backstabbing, influence peddling and overzealous campaigning are all contained in a midwestern high school election (a metaphoric depiction of the real thing) that gets wildly out of hand. Matthew Broderick stars as the teacher tasked with overseeing the election and a never-better Reese Witherspoon plays the student candidate he alternately loathes and lusts after. The snotty and condescending tone (a recurring

Adam's Picks



1. MALPERTUIS

In light of the inexplicably popular Netflix series KAOS, which presents the Gods of ancient Greece in modern day garb, here's a far more resonant mythological inversion. Something else Jean Ray's MALPERTUIS recalls is the fiction of H.P. Lovecraft (alongside whom Ray appeared in the pages of WEIRD TALES), with the latter's themes of elder gods wreaking havoc in the modern world given a fresh and relevant tweaking. Ray provides a confounding account of Zeus and his fellow immortals captured by an evil sorcerer and sewn into human skins; in this guise they struggle to subside in a

element in Payne's films) tends to grate, but the perception and intelligence on display are undeniable.

AMAZON



2. DRESSED TO KILL

Not the best film made by **Brian De Palma** (that designation, I feel, goes to his subsequent feature BLOW OUT) but definitely up there, DRESSED TO KILL provides a sexy and perverse inversion of **PSYCHO**, taking its themes of cross dressing and psychosis to a very early-eighties extreme. The film was notorious in 1980 for some hard R-rated content, even though its other major antecedent, the Italian giallo film cycle of the previous decade, far outdid its excesses. What resonates is the dreamlike atmosphere and visual invention, which have no modern-day parallels.

AMAZON



haunted mansion, and a world that no longer believes in them.

BOOK



2. ANARCHY AND ALCHEMY: THE FILMS OF ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY

For those unsure of what precisely constitutes an Alejandro Jodorowsky film, here's the definitive study of his cinematic output. Authored by Ben Cobb, **ANARCHY AND ALCHEMY** is packed with voluminous footnotes referencing the many mystical and alchemical elements Jodorowsky packs into his films. Cobb also lets his subject's insanely colorful personality shine through, with quotes from a plethora of sources and a lengthy interview in which Jodorowsky proves he's every bit as interesting as the films he makes (the only problem: this book was released in 2007, and so doesn't cover Jodorowsky's most recent films).

BOOK



3. **NOTHIN' BUT A GOOD TIME: THE UNCENSORED STORY OF '80's HAIR METAL**

Funny: I lived through the eighties and don't recall the term "Hair Metal" ever being breached. That's not the only anachronism to be found in this three-part docuseries, which recounts the Glam metal (the correct designation) phenomenon, profiling bands like Poison, Great White, Warrant, Skid Row and Guns 'N' Roses. For some reason it gives short shift to equally important names like Van Halen and Bon Jovi, and completely ignores 1970s predecessors like Aerosmith, Cheap Trick and Sweet. It's undeniable, however, that **NOTHIN' BUT A GOOD TIME** is just that, with its primary emphasis on the two elements integral to any rock 'n' roll saga: sex and drugs, which were present in great abundance during the 1980s.

PARAMOUNT PLUS



4. **JOINT SECURITY AREA**

The debut feature of **OLDBOY**'s Chan-wook Park was this virtuosic drama about a violent incident on the border of North and South Korea. The story is told from the point of view of a woman officer of the Joint Security force (Lee Yeong-ae, who'd go on to headline Park's **LADY VENGEANCE**) interviewing survivors of the melee. Their recollections make for a **RASHOMON**-like investigation of the incident, which began with an

3. **SISTERS**

An early effort by Brian DePalma that plays like a dry run for **DRESSED TO KILL**, and adequately showcases both his good and bad qualities as a filmmaker. **SISTERS** is highly derivative and overwrought, in other words, but also visually dazzling and consistently inventive. It's about a troubled beauty (Margot Kidder) and her deranged twin, who's apparently killed one of her sibling's suitors, leading to an investigation and a "surprise" ending (which won't be too surprising to anyone who's seen **PSYCHO**).

FILM



4. **SYMPATHY FOR MR. VENGEANCE**

Chan-wook Park's second feature, which is a bit too style conscious for its own good. It is nonetheless a visually stunning account of Ryu (Shin Ha-kyun), a kind-hearted but none-too-bright deaf man, and his attempts at financing his dying sister's kidney transplant. He unwisely casts his lot with a band of illegal organ peddlers, with disastrous results. This leads Ryu to enact a hideous revenge, but not before he's committed an even dumber act: kidnapping a young girl (Bo-bae Han) who happens to be the daughter of a wealthy CEO (Song Kang-ho). Unfortunately for Ryu, the girl drowns on his watch (his face is turned away at the time and, being deaf, he can't hear her screams), his sister commits suicide and the kid's

unlikely friendship between opposing military outfits and ended in extremely brutal fashion. The film is unflinching in its presentation of violence, but also quite stylish, with a final shot that's simply breathtaking.

CRITERION CHANNEL



5. DUNE BY ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY—TEASER TRAILER

I'm not entirely convinced by this AI-generated mock trailer for [Alejandro Jodorowsky's](#) unmade 1970s [DUNE](#) adaptation. The visual design is more redolent of the 1950s than the 70s, and the dreamy slow-motion aesthetic is very un-Jodorowsky-like (with the weirdness of his films due in large part to the straightforwardness of their presentation). Nonetheless, the grandiose exoticism of Jodorowsky's vision is well captured, with proposed cast members like Orson Welles and Mick Jagger seen poised amid jaw-dropping surreal vistas (Jodorowsky's other major casting choice, Salvador Dali, goes unseen). It's safe to say that this [DUNE](#), had it been made, would have been one of the most batshit-crazy films of all time, something this trailer imparts quite definitively.

YOUTUBE

distraught father decides to enact his own brand of vengeance—which turns out to be even uglier than what Ryu did to the organ sellers. As you might have guessed, this is EXTREMELY morose, graphically violent stuff that takes the brutality of [JSA](#) to unheard-of extremes.

FILM



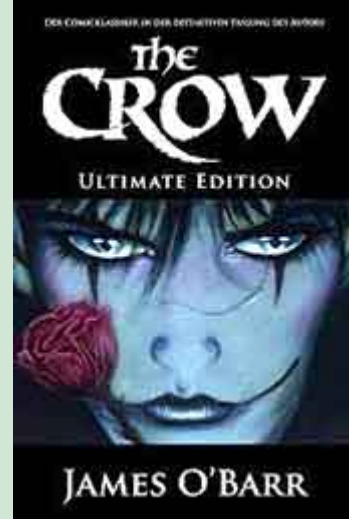
5. DEADLINE

A Canadian import that's halfway worthwhile, meaning its first half is provocative and compelling and its second not so much. It's about a horror novelist (Stephen Young) who finds his most morbid imaginings invading his reality, with the main action intercut with gruesome vignettes featuring various never-seen-again folks bearing reasonably complex backstories (not unlike chapters in a horror novel in which subsidiary characters are introduced only to be immediately killed off). That's only the first half, however, with the second taken up with trite arguments about artistic responsibility and an aura that grows increasingly misogynistic.

FILM

Also New

- **KRIS KRISTOFFERSON: 1936-2024** (Commentary)
- **DEFENDING YOUR LIFE** (Film)
- **THE CROW 1994** (Film)
- **HORROR NOVELS ABOUT MAKING A MOVIE: A RANKING** (Commentary)
- **SICK** (Fiction)
- **SILVER BULLET** (Film)
- **Archived newsletters for easy reference**
- ***And Much More!***



Insider Info

As most of my readers have probably inferred, video games aren't my thing. Certainly, I used to like them, having wasted countless hours (and dollars) on Atari and Nintendo products in my early years. That was before spending an unrewarding few months in the mid-1990s toiling in the video game industry, and since then I've gone out of my way to avoid all things gaming-related.



In recent weeks, however, the news coming out of the gaming-sphere has piqued my interest—and that news isn't good. I'm speaking of the AAA game industry, i.e. video games given substantial budgets by major publishers, which at present are in **a mighty precarious state**.

Consider: Ubisoft, one of the largest video game publishers on the market, recently released its most ambitious products of 2024—SKULL AND BONES, STAR WARS OUTLAWS and ASSASSIN'S CREEK—and, as **summarized by YouTuber RGT 85**, "one completely flopped, one semi-flopped, and one got delayed." Speaking of flops, in early August Sony's online multiplayer game CONCORD, which had a reported 8-year development period and a \$400 million(!) budget, **was taken offline after just two weeks** due to abysmal sales (rendering it the biggest disaster in video game history). Add to this the unfortunate fact that Microsoft's Activision Blizzard **just laid off nearly 400 of its employees** and that Ubisoft's workers are set to

strike in the coming weeks, and it does indeed seem as if AAA gaming is in big trouble.

The reasons? Take your pick: a dearth of quality product, highly dysfunctional employer-employee relations, an overconcentration on DEI, “toxic positivity” (or inability on the part of game developers to accept negative criticism), ill-advised partnerships with questionable sources (I say **anyone seeking narrative “enhancements” from an outfit calling itself Sweet Baby Inc.** deserves what they get), an inability to adapt to changing media and a deep misunderstanding of the field and its patrons (with the gaming industry apparently chasing that mythic “Modern Audience” so coveted by Hollywood). It seems gaming developers have screwed up in every possible way, and may well have brought about their own demise.

The good news? Gaming, like the film industry, isn’t confined to the big budget sphere. As a **2023 leaked email from Xbox head Phil Spencer** noted, many of the top games were put out by “independent studios with full access to distribution.” I expect that situation will repeat itself in the coming years, as AA and III (meaning mid-level and independent) games gain a welcome foothold in a quality-starved market.



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

I'm done reading. To the website!

The Bedlam Files, Sept/Oct 2024

Visit **The Bedlam Files** website. Feel free to share this newsletter as well.

You received this email because you signed up on our website. We hope you enjoy it.

[Unsubscribe](#)

