

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

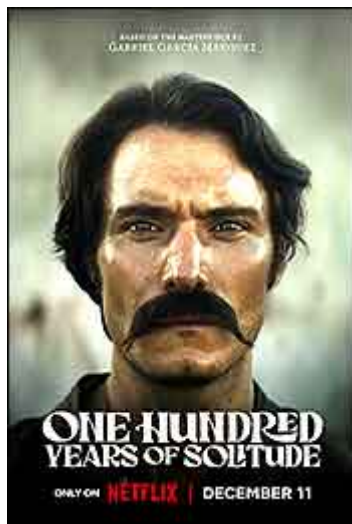
# THE BEDLAM FILES

*With Adam Groves*

“For a long time I was embarrassed to say I was a ‘B’ movie actor...But now that I see what Hollywood's putting out, I realized ‘B’ actually means ‘better.’”

— Bruce Campbell

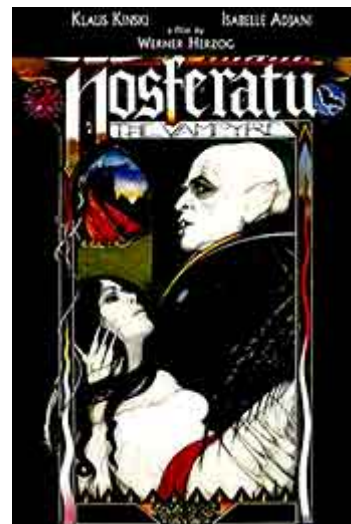
## Streaming Now



### 1. ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE

The most famous novel to emerge from the Latin American Boom, and the quintessence of the term magic realism, ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE went unfiled for over fifty years (aside from having one its characters spun off in Ruy Guerra's ERENDIRA) based on the wishes of its author Gabriel Garcia Marquez. This miniseries adaptation came about due to Marquez's family selling the film rights after his 2014 death. Directors Alex Garcia Lopez and Laura Mora Ortega faced quite a

## Adam's Picks



### 1. NOSFERATU THE VAMPYRE

I have yet to see Robert Eggers' remake of F.W. Murnau's NOSFERATU, but can't imagine it will top Werner Herzog's stunning 1979 shot-for-shot redo. Murnau's spare silent movie imagery proved a surprisingly potent match for Herzog's quirky sensibilities. The narrative is extremely minimal and not a little slow moving; shots are held far longer than normal (even by European art movie standards) and Herzog completely jettisons traditional vampire movie scares in favor of an atmospheric evocation of evil. The film needs to be viewed more than once, but I didn't find

challenge, as Marquez's heirs were reportedly *very* particular about the handling of the series, and so deserve extra credit for turning out such a vibrant and stylish program—based, at least, on its first eight episodes (with the next batch scheduled for a later date).

NETFLIX



## 2. THE RED VIRGIN

A biopic about Hildegart Rodríguez (Alba Planas), a young woman who in early twentieth century Spain was raised to become a genius and feminist icon by her domineering mother (Najwa Nimri), who when things become too complicated ended her offspring's life. This account was previously fictionalized in a similarly titled 1986 novel by Fernando Arrabal that offered a highly surreal and alchemical treatment, whereas this Paula Ortiz directed film takes a more straightforward approach. I prefer Arrabal's interpretation, but in Ortiz's hands the material works just fine. It's a thorny tale that raises many troubling questions about misogyny, femininity and patriarchy, all of which Ortiz, to her credit, unashamedly faces down.

AMAZON

doing so at all difficult, as it exerts a near-hypnotic fascination.

FILM



## 2. ONE DECEMBER NIGHT

Or: the Bruce Campbell Hallmark Movie. He plays one half of the “legendary” music duo Bedford & Sullivan (Peter Gallagher plays the other) that’s been broken up for a decade. Off-setting them is the standard Hallmark movie heroine: a determined, and very photogenic, young woman who’s lucky in business but unlucky in love. That woman is Gallagher’s daughter Quinn (Eloise Mumford), a music manager dispatched by her agency to set up a Bedford & Sullivan reunion concert. In so doing she runs into Campbell’s goateed son Jason (Brett Dalton), resulting in Q&J reconnecting with their elders, learning some valuable life lessons and finding romance. Campbell, at least, appears to be enjoying himself in what has become his standard post-EVIL DEAD role of a quip-happy smartass.

FILM



### 3. CARRY-ON

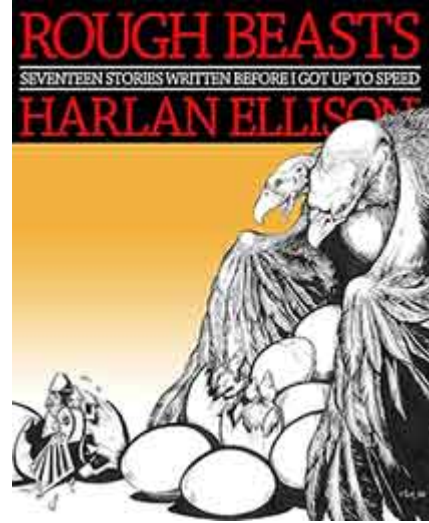
One of the better recent Netflix thrillers, although CARRY-ON suffers nonetheless from many of the shortcomings that appear to be endemic to such fare. Taron Egerton stars as an LAX based TSA agent who becomes embroiled in a dangerous gambit orchestrated by a scumbag (Jason Bateman) looking to smuggle a deadly chemical agent onto a plane. I found the first half unerringly suspenseful in the way it ensnares its hero in an ingeniously worked out succession of calamities, but after that things go awry, with the film shifting from a keenly wrought psychological thriller to a DIE HARD-esque action fest, and in the process losing any semblance of plausibility.

NETFLIX



### 4. YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN, KID

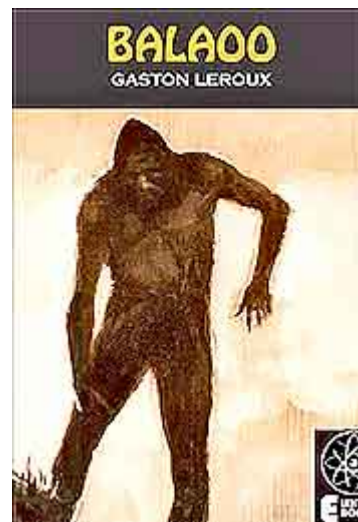
In this 10-minute short a little girl (Sophia Andrews) finds herself



### 3. ROUGH BEASTS

An absolute must-have collection by the inimitable Harlan Ellison. As the title warns, the stories collected here hail from the early days of Ellison's career, specifically the late 1950s, and so aren't as strong as later works like "I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream," "A Boy and His Dog," etc. This is a first-rate collection nonetheless, with one story, 1957's "Invulnerable," that can stand with Ellison's finest work. Also featured is "Way of The Assassin," a revised version of the notorious DOOMSMAN (1967), the trippy "Up the Down Escalator," about the bloody hallucinations experienced by an apparently schizophrenic murderer, and "Hit-Skip," involving a hit-and-run accident whose perpetrator gets his comeuppance in a genuinely unexpected twist ending.

BOOK



### 4. BALAOO

An altogether outrageous Gaston Leroux authored account of a pithecanthrope, or

trapped in a dark house with an unseen presence afoot and only her mentally unstable mother for company. Conceptually this film is pretty thin, yes, but in terms of lighting and camerawork, which outdo those of most modern Hollywood movies, it's a standout, with what is arguably the most effective filmic use of a flashlight in recent memory.

YOUTUBE



## 5. CORN

This short runs around twelve minutes. Entirely dialogue free, it has a Hazmat suit wearing individual attempting to escape from a tyrannical authority in a mechanized dystopia—or at least, that's what the official synopsis claims. It's hard to make out much of anything from the dimly lit technoscapes, peopled with indistinct figures, on display, but the film's major attribute is its air of otherworldly strangeness, which is intricately wrought and overpowering.

YOUTUBE

ape-man. Created by a mad scientist, Balao can pass for human but retains his animal nature, and is pressed into committing crimes by a band of forest-dwelling criminals. But this pithecanthrope has a soft side, as evidenced by his longing for the angelic daughter of the scientist who created Balao. If any of this sounds familiar that's because the story is essentially a rehash of Leroux's PHANTOM OF THE OPERA, with a forest in place of an opera house. Where BALAO excels is in Leroux's oft-spectacular descriptions, such as an especially wild interlude in which Balao trains a fellow simian to impersonate human behavior. BOOK

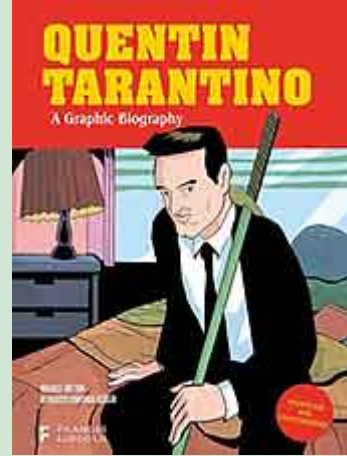


## 5. THE BIG DOLL HOUSE

Among women in prison movies THE BIG DOLL HOUSE is one of the biggies. Released in 1971, it was director **Jack Hill's** first major hit, and established many of the genre's clichés. The film was also notable for providing the first major role for Pam Grier, playing one of several inmates of the eponymous "Doll House" (others include B-movie queen Roberta Collins, Judy Brown and Pat Woodell). The outrageousness that struck initial viewers has long since worn off (not least because the film has been so widely imitated), but what remains striking is the artful lighting and staging, which help obscure the flimsiness of sets that appear to have been—and most likely *were*—made of cardboard. FILM

## Also New

- **DISNEY'S A CHRISTMAS CAROL** (Film)
- **NIGHT OF THE COMET** (Film)
- **THE POLAR EXPRESS** (Film)
- **QUENTIN TARANTINO: A GRAPHIC BIOGRAPHY** (Graphic Novel)
- **A BILTMORE CHRISTMAS** (Film)
- **MY BEST FRIEND'S BIRTHDAY: THE MAKING OF A QUENTIN TARANTINO FILM** (NonFiction)
- **XMAS SPECIALS FOR THE IRREPARABLY BRAIN DAMAGED: JAPANESE EDITION** (Commentary)
- **Archived newsletters for easy reference**
- ***And Much More!***



## Insider Info

To those who've questioned my claims about the imminent implosion of the entertainment

industry, I'll have to confess you were absolutely right about my predictive abilities being off: I had no idea the dissolution would commence as quickly or as dramatically as it has.

Let's start with Hollywood circa 2024, or as it's become known, *Hollywas*, whose recent failures would take far more space than I've got to properly document. Suffice it to say that expensive megaflops have become so common they've been given a name, "flopbusters," while **industry layoffs continue to proliferate**, with even **powerful executives feeling the crunch**. I recently asked a friend who works a high-level job at Disney who was next on the layoff train. His answer: "Everyone."

All this failure appears to have had a most curious side-effect: Hollywood no longer seems to know how to handle success. I base that on the strife that erupted after the success of *IT ENDS WITH US*, which culminated with **the film's star Blake Lively suing its director/co-star Justin Baldoni**, something I'd expect to occur in the wake of a flop but not a hit.

As for the publishing industry, I don't really have much to say about its 2024 failures due to the fact that, again, they're too

The logo for 'FLOPBUSTER' is presented in a blue rectangular box with a yellow border. The word 'FLOPBUSTER' is written in a bold, yellow, serif font with a black outline, centered within the box.

myriad to conclusively document—and also the fact that, frankly, I've stopped paying attention. Why? I'll let some of the past year's NetGalley plot synopses speak for themselves:

- *“BOOKSHOPS & BONEDUST meets OUR FLAG MEANS DEATH in this cozy fantasy on the low seas, where lesbian pirates find out if enemies actually can become lovers!”*
- *“Set in the near future, PILGRIMS is about a washed-up Latin teacher who tries to save the world from Catholic aliens.”*
- *“Meet Jack the Ripper's daughter, as she teams up with Sherlock Holmes' sister to solve the goriest crime in Victorian London!”*

To use a millennial cliché: I just can't.



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

**I'm done reading. To the website!**

### **The Bedlam Files, December 2024**

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