

FEBRUARY 2025 | Just take me to the website, please.

# THE BEDLAM FILES

*With Adam Groves*

“Be yourself, everyone else is already taken.”

— Oscar Wilde

## Streaming Now



### 1. **PARASITE**

Did this K-drama deserve the Academy Award sweep it received in 2020 (when it somehow beat out Scorsese and Tarantino)? No, but it is pretty damn good, a gripping and suspenseful take on the haves and have-nots, as depicted by the Parks, a wealthy South Korean family completely unaware that a poorer clan whose members all have jobs in the Park household are actually living therein. I noticed echoes of **BAD RONALD** and **HIDER IN THE HOUSE**, yet **PARASITE** emerges as a wholly original, and very up to date, piece of filmmaking (which doesn't change the

## Adam's Picks



### 1. **LANDIS: THE STORY OF A REAL MAN ON 42<sup>ND</sup> STREET**

The only biography that exists on the late Bill Landis (1959-2008), and a damn good book: succinct, intelligent and as authoritative as it's possible to be about this notoriously secretive individual. Landis, one of the premiere chroniclers of grindhouse cinema, was a tortured addict who in addition to writing in-depth reportage on Grindhouse fare--collected in **SLEAZOID EXPRESS**--hustled and performed in numerous 1980s-era porno films. **LANDIS** relates this dark tale with enormous brio, and is only

fact that **THE IRISHMAN** and **ONCE UPON A TIME IN HOLLYWOOD** were better).

NETFLIX



## 2. THE WINDOW

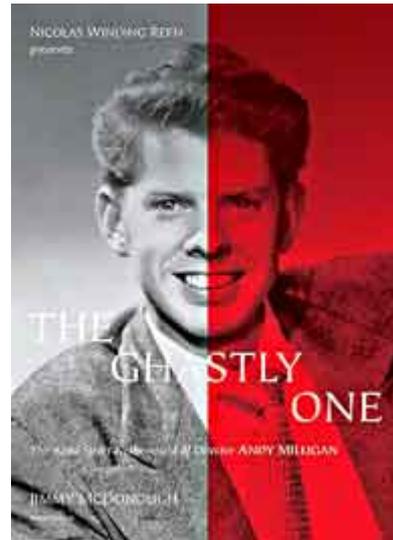
A nifty 1949 noir about a kid (Bobby Driscoll, on loan from Disney) who witnesses a murder committed by his upstairs neighbor. Driscoll tries to alert his parents and the police to what he's seen, but no one believes him--and things get really hairy when his mom forces him to apologize to the killers, thus alerting them to the fact that he knows about the murder. The proceedings are taut, admirably contained and suspenseful, with expert helming by longtime cinematographer turned director Ted Tetzlaff. A standout element is the ultra-stark, shadowy photography, which is about as noir as noir gets.

MAX



110 pages, so you really have no excuse not to read it.

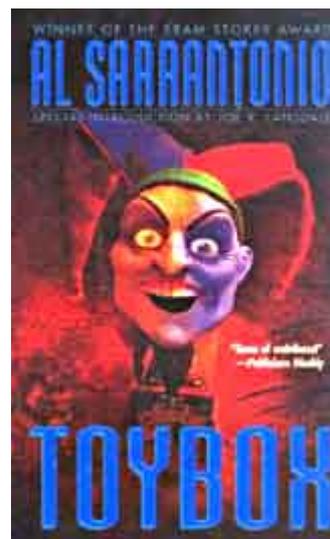
BOOK



## 2. THE GHASTLY ONE

The best of the many biographies written by former Bill Landis cohort Jimmy McDonough. It certainly has the personal touch, with McDonough admitting up front that he knew and loved its subject, the exploitation film legend Andy Milligan, and actually took care of him in his final HIV-afflicted years: "Not many biographers get to wipe the ass of their subject, but I did, more than a few times." Yet McDonough's affection for Milligan and his films doesn't blind him to the shortcomings of either. A chief virtue of **THE GHASTLY ONE** is its unblinking depiction of Milligan's near-psychotic assholery, as well as the beyond-seedy exploitation milieu in which he labored.

BOOK



### 3. THE GORGE

An action-horror fest that's nearly done in by substandard CGI, hard-to-follow fight scenes and a narrative that's rarely plausible. What **THE GORGE** has in its favor is, unexpectedly, a core romance that actually works. Miles Teller and Anya Taylor-Joy play two extremely photogenic soldiers stationed on either side of a vast gorge that's home to all sorts of dangerous critters. The two start a flirtation involving signals to each other from across the gorge and an eventual face-to-face encounter that proves fateful in many respects. The mere fact that I found myself rooting for these characters and their relationship negates many (but not all!) of my complaints.

APPLE TV



### 4. QUIET APOCALYPSE/CTHULHU ATTACKS THE US NAVY

Here's a cosmic horror two-fer, a pair of short-shorts lasting around two minutes each. First up is **QUIET APOCALYPSE**, a melancholy depiction of Earth in the wake of an invasion by dimly glimpsed alien critters, with a despairing narrator musing "There is nothing anyone can do" and that "Maybe it's better this way." **CTHULHU ATTACKS THE US NAVY** is a "found footage" depiction, supposedly hailing from 1958, of the dread god Cthulhu rising up from the deep and laying waste to a naval ship. Neither film is especially deep or profound, but the no-budget special

### 3. TOYBOX

In the wake of the January 28 passing of the veteran horror novelist Al Sarrantonio, here's a brief look back at his first short story collection. Some of the contents of **TOYBOX** approach greatness, such as "Children of Cain," about a boy exploring his own latent psychosis through animal killings that inevitably escalate into more heinous crimes--hence the opening line "Tonight I killed my mother in her bed." "Red Eve," concerning a future world where school kids learn about the lifespan of the world's last vampire, is another standout, as is "Richard's Head," about an eccentric genius whose head has some unique properties outside its abnormal intelligence. Al Sarrantonio was a true original without question, and **TOYBOX** makes for an excellent introduction.

BOOK

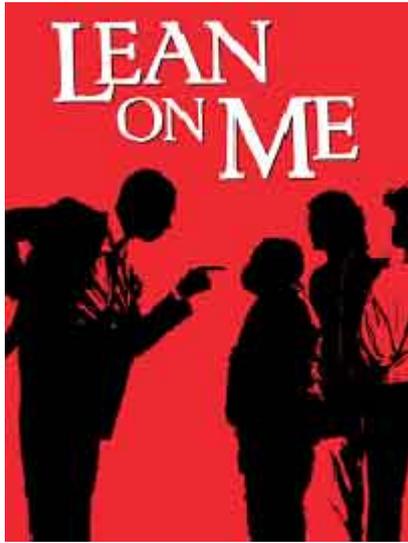


### 4. THE FOLKS AT RED WOLF INN

A 1972 film that's known by a variety of different titles (**TERROR ON THE MENU**, **TERROR AT RED WOLF INN**, **TERROR HOUSE**, etc.) and worth seeing under any of them. The dialogue is stale and the characters underwritten, but **THE FOLKS AT RED WOLF INN** is nonetheless one of the better examples of cannibal-themed dark comedy, with a young woman (Linda Gillin) sent to the titular residence, a secluded beach spot,

effects are stunning, further corroborating an already-proven theorem: that mainstream Hollywood, with its bloated budgets, is becoming increasingly redundant.

YOUTUBE



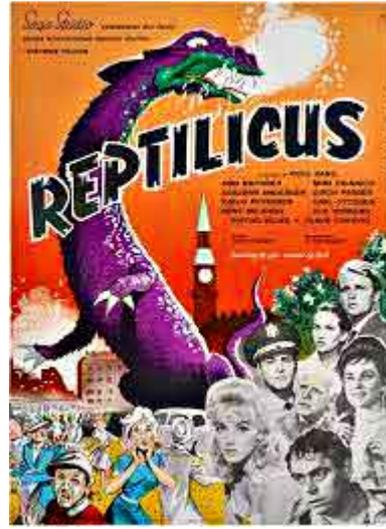
### 5. LEAN ON ME

Morgan Freeman has lost much of his acting mojo in his declining years, but back in the 1980s he was the man. For proof see his work in **STREET SMART** (1987), in which he co-starred, and **LEAN ON ME** (1989), which he headlined. It's a John Avildson helmed depiction of the late Joe Clark (1938-2020) and his reign as principal of the New Jersey based Eastside High School. Clark was known for "unconventional" disciplinary methods inspired by his days as an Army drill sergeant, and this film, despite being very Hollywood in its approach, doesn't sanitize his behavior in the slightest. Essentially, Clark is presented as a black Popeye Doyle: a bullying sadist who gets the job done, with Freeman proving an unexpectedly harsh and intimidating screen presence.

PEACOCK

after ostensibly winning a mail order contest. She quickly grows suspicious of her hosts' odd behavior, the constantly disappearing guests and the strange cuts of meat she's fed. Yes, you can guess where the story is heading, but the direction by the late Bud Townsend (1921-1997) is stylish and idiosyncratic, and offers up some terrifically quirky elements, including end credits that take the form of a menu.

FILM



### 5. REPTILICUS

The entire population of Copenhagen apparently participated in this 1962 outrage, Denmark's first monster movie. It concerns a patch of prehistoric skin, discovered at an oil drilling site, that's part of a critter scientists dub **REPTILICUS**, which can regenerate itself from any portion of its body--with electricity, bequeathed by a lightning storm, accelerating the process. The fact that director Sidney Pink evidently had no clue how to properly film his model creature renders the proceedings especially enjoyable. I find it inconceivable that anyone could not enjoy a movie featuring thousands of extras running from a ridiculous model monster at which oodles of firepower and explosions are lobbed.

FILM



Ward off the Ides of March with Bedlam Files swag.

## Also New

- **ECCO: THE STORY OF A FAKE MAN ON 42ND STREET** (Nonfiction)
- **THE MANITOU** (Fiction)
- **POLTERGEIST II: THE OTHER SIDE** (Film)
- **POLTERGEIST III** (Film)
- **FEVER YEAR: THE KILLER FLU OF 1918** (Graphic Novel)
- **ON SLEAZOID EXPRESS** (Commentary)
- **LOCUS SOLUS** (Fiction)
- **Archived newsletters for easy reference**
- ***And Much More!***



## Insider Info

A confession: I've never seen **CLEOPATRA** (1963). I have, however, read quite extensively about its production, an ungodly



expensive five-year ordeal that transformed Hollywood forever (and not for the better). Books like **MY LIFE WITH CLEOPATRA** by Walter Wanger and Joe Hyams and **CLEOPATRA AND THE UNDOING OF HOLLYWOOD** by Patrick Humphries are so much fun I see no reason to watch the movie, as it can't possibly be any

more entertaining than the story of its making, which entailed a ballooning budget, movie star madness, a widely publicized Hollywood romance and a less-than-lucrative release.

My point? Hollywood needs to be careful that its off-screen dramas don't overpower its content. Certainly, the adage that all publicity is good publicity has some validity, but there's also such a thing as too much "good publicity," and present-day Hollywood appears to have reached that point. The bloat and strife of CLEOPATRA's production, let's not forget, were unusual in its day, whereas now every other movie seems to be accompanied by excess drama and/or controversy.

I haven't seen the 2024 film **IT ENDS WITH US**, and have no intention of doing so. Why bother? The constantly **escalating feud between its leading lady Blake Lively and director-star Justin Baldoni**, which began with Lively filing a sexual harassment complaint against Baldoni and continued with him suing her, is entertaining enough on its own.

The same holds true for Disney-Marvel's **CAPTAIN AMERICA: BRAVE NEW WORLD**, which with its endless reshoots--often, it's been alleged, without the benefit of a script--and ill-thought-out statements from its lead actor ("Captain America represents a lot of different things and I don't think the term "America" should be one of those representations"), has had enormous behind-the-scenes strife. So too the upcoming **SNOW WHITE**, a Disney release that seemingly inspires a new controversy every week (*Reshoots! Bratty starlets! Whitewashed trailers!*).

Why all the strife? It appears that in its zeal to excise anything the slightest bit offensive from its product and appeal to that elusive "modern audience" nobody can seem to define (much less locate), Hollywood has lost the plot in more ways than one. But I can't say I'm not enjoying the spectacle.



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

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

### **The Bedlam Files, February 2025, Issue 25-02**

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](#)

