

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

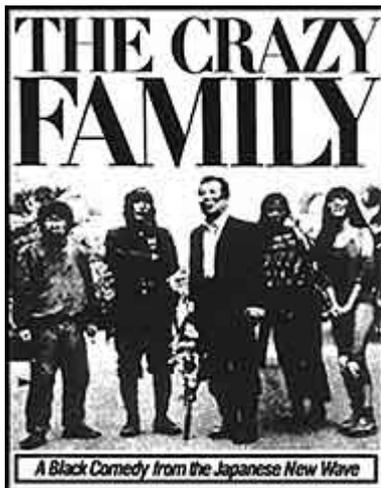
THE BEDLAM FILES

With Adam Groves

“When we do fantasy, we must not lose sight of reality.”

— Walt Disney

Streaming Now



1. THE CRAZY FAMILY

Sogo Ishii's *CRAZY FAMILY* (1984) is widely credited as the film that kicked off the Japanese new wave movement of the late eighties and nineties. It begins with the eponymous family moving into an ultra-modern bungalow. Katsuya (Katsuya Kobayashi) is obsessed with keeping the place tidy, and so wigs out when he discovers termites have set up shop. He determines to de-bug the place at all costs, digging a giant hole in the kitchen floor to find the mites' lair. His wife Saeko (Mitsuko Baisho), meanwhile, takes to performing strip teases for her visiting grandfather

Adam's Picks

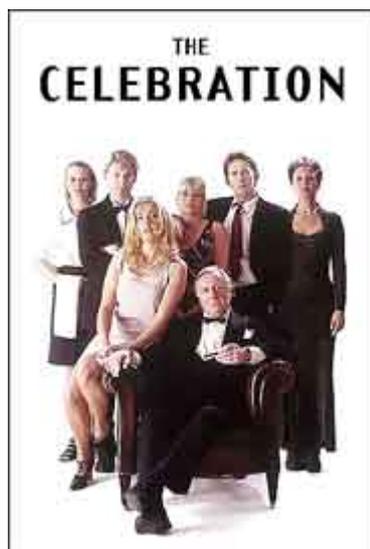


1. THE MIST

A 2007 Frank Darabont helmed Stephen King adaptation with a difference: it's actually good. *THE MIST* is about a strange mist, unleashed by a scientific research lab, that one morning appears on the horizon of a small Maine town. In a local supermarket several folks find themselves trapped when the mist blankets the town and all manner of freaky critters emerge from it: dog-sized spiders, mutant mosquitoes, flying monstrosities, dimly glimpsed four-legged giants, etc. The budget

(Hitoshi Ueki) and his lecherous buddies, while her nerdy son Masaki (Yoshiki Arizono) builds strange technological contraptions, and his sister Erika (Kudou Yuuki) becomes dangerously obsessed with her favorite pop stars. Eventually Katsuya barricades the family inside the house, inciting a veritable carnival of violence and destruction. Ishii was truly at the top of his game here, with a kinetic and highly innovative style that freely utilizes fade outs, jump cuts and a hard rock score to powerful effect.

SHUDDER



2. THE CELEBRATION

The first, and best, entry in the Lars von Trier instituted “Dogma 95” movement (whose subsequent efforts included THE IDIOTS and JULIEN DONKEY-BOY). Under the rules of Dogma 95 a film must be shot entirely with handheld cameras, utilizing only natural light and sound; no post-production effects are allowed, and only actual locations can be used. Seems like a pretty constrained way to make a movie, but in THE CELEBRATION (1998) it worked. An unmistakable feeling of truth shines through, and I strongly doubt the film, about long-buried secrets surfacing during a two-day celebration held by a wealthy Danish clan, would have worked half as well if shot conventionally. As it is, THE CELEBRATION is a perfect marriage of

was limited, leading to a down-and-dirty handheld shooting style that’s directly opposed to the more classical approach of Darabont’s other features, and a nihilistic-to-the-point-of-hysteria ending that remains a major point of controversy in the horror community.

FILM



2. TOKYO BLOOD

Behold: the 1993 return to filmmaking by THE CRAZY FAMILY’s Sogo Ishii, following a nine-year lag. TOKYO BLOOD only lasts 33 minutes, but contains enough inspiration and stylistic verisimilitude for a dozen conventional features. The subject is early 1990s Tokyo, which forms the setting of four standalone segments: “Street Noise,” about an anonymous city dweller (Tatsuo Yamada) driven mad by the dehumanizing nature of urban life; “Bicycle,” featuring a pregnant woman (Sumiko Ohyama) attempting to spice up her dull existence by asking a bike riding stranger (Chiemi Tachihara) to kidnap her; “Hole,” in which an unidentified man (Tomoro Taguchi) is probed by a pair of no-nonsense doctors (Suzuki Matsuo and Toshiya Sakai); and “Heart of Stone,” in which we hear the voice of an unseen young woman (Mai Hoshō) talking about a mysterious, and possibly extraterrestrial, rock that’s directly responsible for an outbreak of “Stone Disease.” Good stuff.

style and content, with each enhancing the other.

FILM

CRITERION



3. THE SEPARATION

Animator Robert Morgan is the UK's master of all things body horror related—indeed, I believe that, after David Cronenberg, Morgan may well be the cinema's foremost purveyor of such fare. The 9-minute stop motion wonder, *THE SEPARATION* (1993), is one of his finest films, being fascinatingly gross (as expected) but containing a more poignant air than is usual in Morgan's films (which tend to black-humored). The subject: a pair of formerly conjoined twins becoming despondent over being separated, leading to some truly nasty business as they try to reattach themselves. Not a word is spoken in this flawlessly visualized film, which has been impeccably remastered and uploaded to YouTube by Morgan himself.

YOUTUBE



3. THE SNOW-WHITE SOLILOQUIES

How this five decades old novel might fit into our ultra-sensitive modern age I'm not sure, but Sheila MacLeod's *SNOW-WHITE SOLILOQUIES* is a most fascinating adult-oriented oddity. It also boasts uniformly lush and erudite prose, and a dreamlike air that's more redolent of a surreal prose poem than the "myth for today" promised by the jacket description. The title character takes the form of a beautiful woman in a state of suspended animation who's quite conscious that she's contained inside a coffin made of "Glass That Breathes." This "triumph of modern engineering" was commissioned by Doc, an immoral genius running a traveling circus whose centerpiece is Snow White. After a while Snow White learns how to communicate by blinking her eyes, and meets her destiny at a raucous wedding party in which...

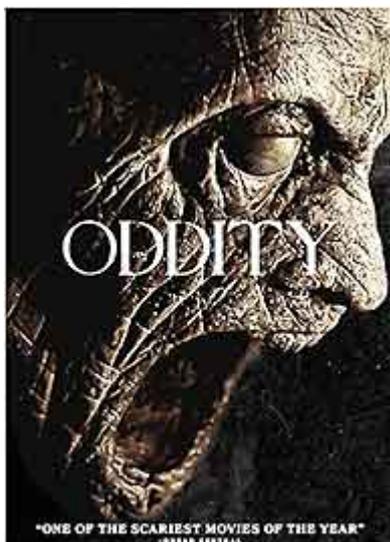
BOOK



4. **KAREN: UNLEASHED**

Another entry in the ever-growing “Hollywood is Screwed” file: a mock trailer for an action-fest about a middle-aged white woman who decides she’s had enough, **KAREN: UNLEASHED** was created entirely by AI. There are distortions and imperfections, certainly, but you’ll have to look very closely to see them, meaning AI has taken yet another step closer to completely dominating the entertainment landscape. Even more noteworthy is the fact that, unlike most recent Hollyweird fare, **KAREN: UNLEASHED** is enormously entertaining, an unrestrained camp-fest that understands the mechanics of action moviemaking and adroitly balances kineticism with overt silliness.

YOUTUBE



5. **ODDITY**

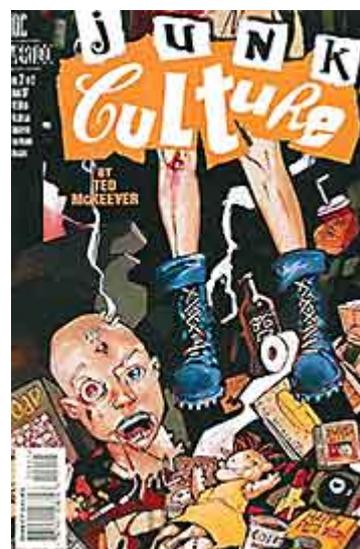
A British horror fest I somehow missed when it played last year. **ODDITY** isn’t



4. **THE SINGING RINGING TREE**

This 1957 East German children’s fantasy, adapted from a Brothers Grimm fairy tale, plays like **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST** on steroids. There’s a beautiful woman, a love-struck beast, a lot of assorted magical business and an Important Moral Lesson. Simplicity is the film’s primary virtue: it only runs 72 minutes, and is quite focused and uncluttered. Audacity is another major selling point, with director Francesco Stefani presenting quite a few elaborate special effects—the freezing of a waterfall, a bed and side table that float in midair, a row of thorn bushes that magically sprout from the ground—with notable ingenuity and vibrant, colorful visuals.

FILM



5. **JUNK CULTURE**

Writer/artist Ted McKeever can always be counted on for the unique and unexpected. Those things are amply

bad, just extremely fragmented, feeling like an anthology rather than the straightforward narrative it is. The setting is an apparently haunted house where a blind clairvoyant (Carolyn Bracken) is investigating the murder of her twin sister. This leads to all manner of macabre shenanigans, as when a woman pulls out various objects from holes in the head of a mannequin, only to be told to “put those back!” and another is confronted at her front door by a stranger who claims to have seen a mysterious someone enter her house. If nothing else, this is a film that definitely lives up to its name.

SHUDDER

displayed in this two-issue 1997 comic from the DC imprint Vertigo, which can likewise be counted on for unique and unexpected fare. JUNK CULTURE has homicidal twin girls who prove disturbingly adept at shooting guns and blowing things up, and, what’s more, they can’t seem to be killed. McKeever is a talented scripter with a gift for the outrageous, and his artwork has a skewed grace that fits this over-the-top narrative quite well.

COMIC



SWAG COMING SOON!

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Original pen-and-ink art depicts a slew of classic monsters, all wrapped around a sleek white mug. Two sizes: 11 oz and 15 oz. "Monster Mash" is the first of three lines we're creating.

If you see our mug art anywhere other than our website, please tell us. We may be small but we're scary when threatened.

Also New

- **DISLOCATION** (Film)
- **HARDCORE** (Film)
- **FOGHEART** (Fiction)
- **GEORGE ARMITAGE: 1942-2025** (Tribute)
- **CONFESSIONS OF A RECOVERING OSCAR VIEWER** (Commentary)
- **THE KILLING OF THE UNICORN: DOROTHY STRATTEN** (Nonfiction)



- **ART! TRASH! TERROR! ADVENTURES IN STRANGE CINEMA** (Commentary)
- **THE JUDAS PROJECT** (Film)
- **Archived newsletters for easy reference**
- ***And Much More!***

Insider Info

Remember that urban myth about the man who bought a plane ticket and then, just as he was about to board said plane, turned and walked

away? I had a similar experience last week, when I nearly purchased a ticket for **SNOW WHITE** but, experiencing an overpowering premonition of incoming disaster, didn't.

In the urban myth under discussion the plane the guy avoided taking went down in flames, suggesting he had some kind of psychic intuition. I had no such intuition, refraining from purchasing that ticket because, simply, I've read the reviews for SNOW WHITE and closely monitored its inception.

SNOW WHITE, for those who don't know, is a live action Disney remake of the studio's **1937 animated classic SNOW WHITE AND SEVEN DWARFS**. Things went south with this new version almost immediately, with a script that **complicated a simple story horrendously** and the casting of the obnoxious **Rachel Zegler** in the title role.

The problems continued with the replacement of the seven dwarfs **with seven "magical beings"** which were then replaced by **CGI dwarfs** in one of the **multiple reshoots** that greatly swelled an already-exorbitant budget. Regarding that budget, the official estimate is \$280 million, but I've heard (and believe) that SNOW WHITE's actual cost was **much higher**.

Added to that was what must be counted as the most calamitous publicity campaign of all time. It was Zegler who **took center stage** in that campaign, trashing the original SNOW WHITE, turning the film into a referendum on the Israel-Palestine conflict and poisoning the relationship with her Israeli born co-star **Gal Gadot**. Zegler's antics had the effect of providing Disney with a scapegoat when the film inevitably flopped, with **"anonymous sources" quoted in the trades** about what a pain in the ass she



was onset, thus conveniently shifting the blame for SNOW WHITE's failure away from Disney's higher-ups.

In the past few years the refrain among Hollywoodians has been "survive 'til '25," the year when the big hit movies would supposedly arrive and improve everybody's fortunes. SNOW WHITE, unfortunately, was supposed to be among those would-be hits. So was CAPTAIN AMERICA: BRAVE NEW WORLD, another 2025 Disney underperformer. How much longer can these megaflops continue before movie theaters (which have been playing SNOW WHITE in empty, or nearly empty, auditoriums) are forced to close? Not much longer, I'd guess.

The "good" news? The theatrical movie experience is thriving outside the US. The Chinese animated feature NE ZHA 2 has proven itself a monster success, garnering a massive \$2.1 billion and currently ranking as the fifth top grossing movie of all time. In other words, Hollywood has fumbled the ball, and its major competitor has picked it up, with *somebody*, at least, making movies people might actually want to see.



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

I'm done reading. To the website!

The Bedlam Files, March 2025, Issue 25-03

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