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# best video Horror

## Slime and gore— it's lovely viewing

Knives dripping with blood, dismembered limbs, spooky old houses—you name it, we just love to be scared...to death!

For a long while horror movies on video had a very bad reputation, mostly caused by the hysteria from a lot of the media, mostly fuelled by Mary Whitehouse.

But now, with the passing into law of the Video Recording Act, all the horror movies on your video shop shelves are all quite legal, a lot of the more dubious ones from the dodgier companies having been despatched to the bin.

It's always been a popular genre, and the range is growing constantly.

Here's a few of our personal favourites, all of which will look great on the coffee table in your condemned slum...

### ALONE IN THE DARK (Rank Video)

Fun chiller with a group of escaped lunatics, led by Jack Palance, terrorising one family, as psychiatrist Donald Pleasence tries to hunt them down. Some

nicely done black comedy and co-starring Dwight Schultz from "The A-Team".

### THE AMITYVILLE HORROR (The Video Collection)

The movie which spawned the sequels "Amityville II: The Possession" and "Amityville 3D", the supposedly true story of the Lutz family and the haunted house they moved into. Soon they were seeing apparitions and slime was oozing from the walls.

James Brolin and Margot Kidder make an effective job of it.

### BASKETCASE (Palace)

Very black comedy with a young man and his secret, which he keeps in a laundry basket. It's his deformed Siamese twin, separated at birth, and who goes on a killing spree after his devoted brother falls in love. Cheaply made by director Frank Henenlotter and very amusing.

Appeals to the drive-in crowds.

Left: "Gotcha"—scene from the comedy horror "Basket Case". Below: classic horror in the misunderstood "Evil Dead".

### A BLADE IN THE DARK (Vestron)

Director Lamberto Bava's stylish *giallo* thriller, with a young composer discovering that his life is starting to parallel the scenes in the horror movie he is writing the score for. Soon friends start to go missing and knife gouges appear in his walls.

Tight mystery with an unsettling final scene.

### BODY COUNT (IVS)

Who is the killer in the mask, hunting the young people in the woods around the camping ground where years before a murder took place? A good cast, including speedway rider Bruce Penhall and "Rambo" star Charles Napier add a little conviction to a pretty formula plot.

Director Ruggero Deodato has done better in the past.

### CAT'S EYE (Cannon)

Effective Stephen King portmanteau with the linking theme of a cat. Stories include Robert Hays in "The Ledge" and James Woods and Alan King in "Quitter Inc.", the story of a company who will do anything to make you stop smoking. Director Lewis Teague fills the movie with "in" jokes for King lovers.

### C.H.U.D. (Medusa)

...Stands for Cannibal Humanoid Underground Dwellers, the creatures created in the New York sewers when toxic waste is dumped under the city. Photographer John Heard discovers them just as the ghastly creatures decide to come out of the sewers to satisfy their hunger.

Great make-up from John Caglione and an effective electronic score by Cooper Hughes.

### CONTAMINATION (European Creative Films)

Obviously "Alien"-inspired, but director Luigi Cozzi makes a good job of this story of alien eggs being smuggled back to Earth. If they get you with their oozing slime—you explode! Fun sci-fi/horror with a good sense of the absurd and a great Goblin soundtrack.

Ian McCulloch, Gisele Hahn and Siegfried Rauch star.

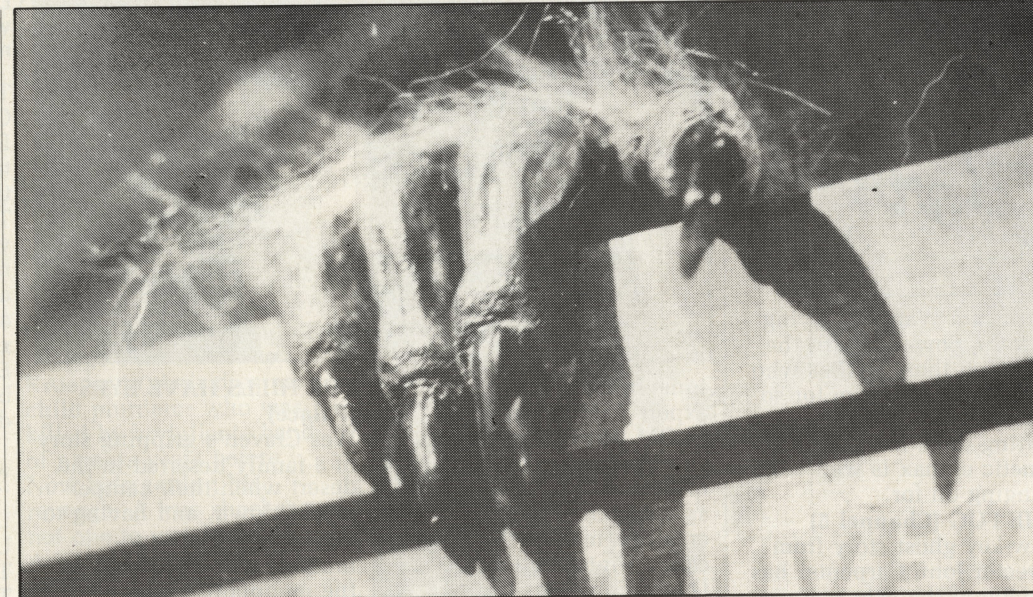
### CREEPERS (Palace)

Also known as "Phenomena", a chiller from cult director Dario Argento. Jennifer Connelley, from "Labyrinth", plays a young woman who has a psychic link with insects. Along with entymologist Donald Pleasence she sets out to track down a murderer in a grim part of Switzerland.

Superbly photographed and definitely not for the squeamish at the maggot-infested climax!

### CREEPSHOW (Mastervision)

Another Stephen King collection, this time handled by director George Romero in the style of



Fifties' comic books, with framed panels and captions around the frame. More comic than ghoulish, with creatures in crates, cockroach infestation and characters returning from the grave for their birthday cake...

The excellent cast includes Fritz Weaver, Hal Holbrook and E.G. Marshall and "Creepshow 2" is on your screens now...

### CRUCIBLE OF TERROR (Virgin)

Poor old Mike Raven... This ex-DJ tried to make himself a horror star in the Christopher Lee mould in the early Seventies but never quite made it. Here he plays a potty sculptor who covers his victims in liquid bronze. A watchable curio, with James Bolam looking embarrassed in the leading role.

### DAY OF THE DEAD (Entertainment In Video)

The third part of George Romero's trilogy, and the goriest and most gripping yet as the zombies outnumber humans by 400,000 to one, and in an underground network of tunnels scientists race for a vaccine, as the soldiers guarding them slowly go stir crazy.

Certainly not for those queasy at the sight of blood but a tense and horrific epic...

### DEMONS (Avatar)

A fast-moving horror job which has been a monster success all over the world. A group of cinema-goers are trapped in the building when a girl who has scratched herself on a Devil's Mask turns into a snarling Demon. The infection spreads and only a few survive, but now how do they get out?

Very stylish and directed by Lamberto Bava. Inevitably, "Demons II" is winning your way...

### DRACULA A.D. 72 (Warner Home Video)

Slightly stagebound attempt to bring the Cushing/Lee "Dracula" movies up to the present day. Lee looks stoic throughout, as does Cushing, but the hilariously dated slang and costumes make this one to smirk at.

The opening sequences, set in Victorian times, is very effective, though.

### THE DEVIL WITHIN HER (Apex)

Very odd Italian "Exorcist" rip-off which is worth watching if only for the sight of Juliet Mills becoming possessed (!). Richard Johnson is the Devil's emissary who must deliver the Devil's child, which she just happens to be carrying.

Very strange, but offbeat enough to keep you watching.

Above: who's in need of a manicure then! Gripping moment from "Creepshow".

### DEVOURING WAVES (Medusa)

Athletic hero Michael Sopkirk finds himself tangling with more than a shark in this aquatic horror story, as the creature which has been chomping through boats and people is a living fossil, a sea beast from millions of years ago. An industrial espionage thriller angle is tacked on reasonably convincingly. Watchable.

### THE EVIL DEAD (Palace)

Yes, the one all the fuss was about. Actually Sam Raimi's movie is a fiendish black comedy, constantly swapping laughs and shocks as five people discover an old shack. On playing the tape they find on the deck they summon up the spirits of The Evil Dead, turning them in to zombies. Only one man survives the night. Or does he?

A modern classic.

### EVIL DEAD II (Palace)

Yes, he does! But Bruce Campbell as Ash has more horrors to contend with, as he has to spend another night in the shack, taking on more of the Dead and something terrible in the cellar. A much higher budget is shown in Raimi's wide range of extraordinary special effects. Gruesome, but with more of an emphasis on laughs. A worthy sequel.

### EVILSPEAK (Apex)

Solace to all of us who suffer from technofear, as a young man at a military academy uses a mighty computer to conjure up the



GEORGE A. ROMERO'S

# DAY OF THE DEAD





Left: one of Jane's finest roles was the prostitute Bea in "Klute", which co-starred Donald Sutherland.

might like to note that this 1977 outing was Meryl's big screen debut.

The next year Fonda won the oscar she had most coveted—that of Best Actress, with her partner Jon Voight taking the Best Actor award for "Coming Home" (Warner Home Video). Jane apparently conceived this post-Vietnam melodrama set in a veterans' hospital, but the film lacked the verve and spirit one would have expected from someone who was such a vehement anti-war protestor. The plot of the movie is more soapy than campaigning, with Fonda playing a Marine captain's wife who has an affair with a paraplegic vet, portrayed by Voight.

"Comes A Horseman" (Warner Home Video) was Fonda's second foray into the Wild West. She played Ella Connors, a rancher determined to stand up to a cattle baron and oil industrialist. Despite a good cast, headed by James Caan, Jason Robards and George Grizzard, the film was ultimately marred by a weak script.

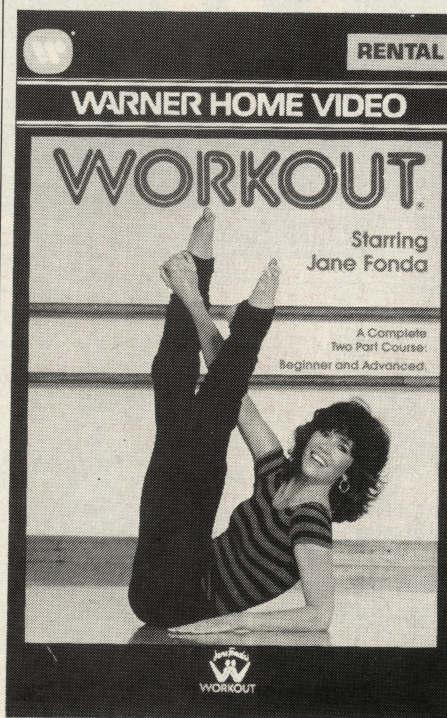
Later that year, director Herbert Ross persuaded the 42 year old Fonda to don a bikini and check into Neil Simon's "California Suite" (RCA/Columbia Video) along with a bevy of top stars including Alan Alda, Michael Caine, Walter Matthau and Richard Pryor, to name but four. Fonda's role as independent Hannah Warren was a small but powerful one which managed to compress a wide range of emotions into a short space of time. The acting was reviewed as top-notch, but Simon's rather clever-clever dialogue grates after a while.

"The China Syndrome" (RCA/Columbia Video) saw Fonda back on campaigning ground yet again, this time in the area of nuclear power. In the film a nuclear power plant goes wrong and sparks off a dangerous confrontation. Fonda played ambitious TV newswoman Brenda Starr, with Jack Lemmon as the plant engineer with a nagging conscience and Michael Douglas as a radical cameraman. The film gained exposure through being

released in the same week as the incident at the Three Mile Island nuclear plant.

"The Electric Horseman" (CIC Video) teamed Fonda and Redford together again, with the leading lady playing a TV news reporter in much the same mould as her "China Syndrome" character. Redford appears as a hard-drinking ex-rodeo star by the name of Sonny Steele, who sells out to a giant company to promote breakfast cereal. Fonda is hot on his trail after he kidnaps a priceless racehorse and heads off into the Rocky Mountains (cue picturesque scenery).

1980 saw Jane Fonda working nine-to-five in the comedy of the same name (CBS/Fox Video). Fonda, Lily Tomlin and Dolly Parton star as a trio of downtrodden secretaries who engineer an office revolt against their chauvinist pig of a boss. The first half of the film



was sheer dynamite, but the plot takes a turn for the worse and becomes plain silly. There followed a TV series of the same name, which didn't break any records for long-running shows.

Two generations of the Fonda family were joined together in 1981's "On Golden Pond" (Channel 5), which starred Jane and her father Henry in his last screen role. The film had a magnificent cast who worked well as a team, with Fonda Snr and Katharine Hepburn winning Academy Awards for their portrayal of an elderly couple trying to enjoy what might be their last summer together. Jane's role as their alienated daughter was for many an important plus point of the film. High finance was the subject of her next film outing in "Rollover" (Warner Home Video), in which she starred with Kris Kristofferson. The photography and Fonda look elegant, but the end result is unfortunately confusing, and the film was a major box-office flop.

A complete change of character was needed for her next film in 1985, the disturbing "Agnes of God" (RCA/Columbia). Here Fonda appears as psychiatrist appointed to look into the case of a young nun who evidently became pregnant and murdered her own baby in the cloistered atmosphere of the nunnery.

Her most recent film appearance at the time of writing is in "The Morning After" (to be released later in the year on Guild) with Jeff Bridges. Sometime promising actress turned alcoholic, Fonda wakes to find a dead man with a knife through his heart lying next to her in bed. She (understandably!) panics and tries to flee the state, but ends up taking her chances with reneck ex-cop Bridges. Should she trust him or shouldn't she?

And as if all this wasn't enough, Jane has managed to find the time to open a chain of gyms and compile several best-selling work outs on record, cassette and videotape. If you fancy "working that body!", you can try "Jane Fonda's Challenge" (Warner Home Video), "Jane Fonda's Primetime Workout" (Video Collection) or the original "Jane Fonda Workout" (Warner Home Video). Ms. Fonda herself is something of an exercise nut, reputedly working out for 90 minutes a day and running six miles as well (away from the autograph hunters?). All this physical effort must have paid off, for as she approaches her 50th birthday this December, she weighs in at a trim 122 pounds.

It seems rather odd that someone who is worth so many tens of millions of dollars is a champion of the underprivileged, veteran anti-nuclear campaigner, and strong socialist, but Jane Fonda is entitled to her own views as much as anybody else. What remains in doubt is whether the public arena is the right place for them to be aired.

A fascinating person and gifted actress, Ms. Fonda has earned her title as the Queen of Hollywood and it's plain she would have made the grade even if her father wasn't who he was. There may well be better actresses, but there's definitely only one Jane Fonda. CK.

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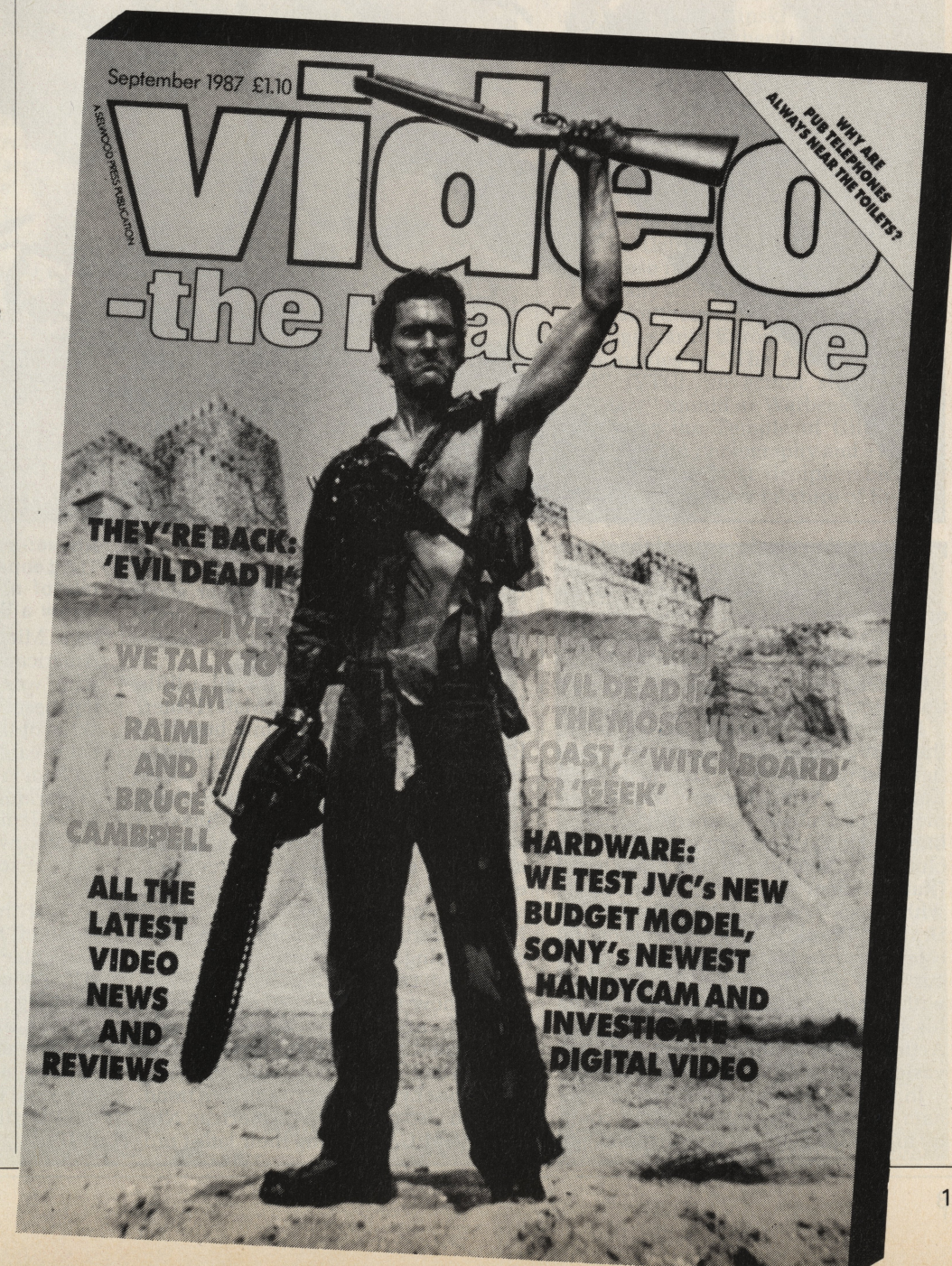
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