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**Barbara Steele in**  
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mono transfers, but in the cheapo, impossible-to-track, EP-mode. Now that the films have come to DVD as a "Double Feature," you'd expect them to correct the error, wouldn't you? Well, dream on, because the DVD of **GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA/GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORA** contains the same mono, fullscreen masters as before. To make the release even more disappointing, TriStar has included two beautiful, wide-screen, stereo trailers for both films, which offer a nice demonstration of what the disc might have been, had anyone cared. (The same trailers are included on the Columbia Tristar DVD of Roland Emmerich's **GODZILLA**, reviewed elsewhere in this issue.) —TL

**ARMY OF DARKNESS** [reviewed VW 19:9, 46:40] was the third installment of Sam Raimi's "Evil Dead" Trilogy, but the first to be released in the DVD format (Universal #20322, \$24.95)—unfortunately, in its truncated, domestic version. Its 1.85:1 widescreen framing is comparable to the previously released LD widescreen version (MCA/Universal #41603), although as is generally the case with DVD releases, the blacks are deeper and the background detail a bit sharper. Colors are rich and vibrant, and the Dolby surround on this single layer disc is as effective as that on the LD, but is available in both English and French. English captions and Spanish subtitles are featured, in addition to 16 chapter stops that are highlighted in the menu and included on an insert in the keepcase (the back page of which, curiously, contains a still of Ash drinking the potion in a scene that is not included in the domestic release). Cast (Campbell and Davidtz) and crew (Raimi)

bios, brief production notes and a letterboxed theatrical trailer (2m 6s)—unavailable on any previous edition—make up the disc's bonus materials. The theatrical trailer contains a few seconds of footage not available in the domestic release, making this DVD-1 release essential for completists.

More recently, **EVIL DEAD 2: DEAD BY DAWN** was given a fine 1.85:1 presentation on DVD by Anchor Bay (#DV10504, \$29.98), though with none of the frills—audio commentary, etc.—accorded to Elite Entertainment's laserdisc [reviewed VW 45:51-53] earlier this year. We found the DVD image quality preferable: it is sharper and more colorful than the LD, with richer, deeper blacks, though the LD boasted a "High Definition SuperScan" transfer. In Chapter 2, we noticed some artifacting in the fog when Ash steps off the porch and begins searching for Linda, but that was the only flaw we noticed. The Dolby Digital (2.0) soundtrack is reasonably crisp, but slightly less lively than that on the Elite LD. The English only disc has been programmed with a meager 12 chapter stops, which are listed on a card inserted in the keepcase and illustrated in the menu. A 1m 30s theatrical trailer is the sole supplement, identical to the one on the Elite LD. No region encoding is indicated. There is no Rosebud Releasing Corporation card at the end of the film, unlike the Japanese import LD. The keepcase incorrectly lists a running time of 85m. —R/SU

**The fine low-budget** sf film based on Philip K. Dick's short story "Second Variety," **SCREAMERS** [reviewed VW 36:17-18] receives its first widescreen (1.85:1) treatment on one side of Columbia Tristar's DVD edition (#11869, \$24.95). The disc's

other side contains the fullscreen version released previously on both video tape and LD. While the film was never supposed to look pretty, the transfer is crisp and the stereo surround is very good in both of the disc's versions. The soundtrack is available in 5:1 Dolby Digital in the English language version, 3:1 DD in Spanish and French. English, French, and Spanish subtitles are featured, along with a hefty 28 chapter stops. We should note, in comparison, that Columbia's LD was given 43 chapter stops, and more detailed liner notes, although the DVD's insert sleeve contains some interesting graphics and stills not included on the LD or tape sleeves. A fullscreen trailer (1m 58s) is the extent of the package's bonus materials. —R/SU

**Compared to their** laserdisc [VW 38:19], Tai Seng's DVD rendition of **TAI CHI II** (Tai Seng #46114, \$29.95, DVD-A) is a bit sharper and the colors are slightly richer. The image is hazy in spots, but a quality presentation makes the low-budget production look considerably better than it did on the old Chinese market release. The DVD includes Cantonese, Mandarin, and English tracks (in 1 channel DD); each is a little scratchy but adequate. The optional English subtitles are yellow here, compared to white on the LD, and the menu design is quite attractive. The DVD has eight chapters fewer than the LD, but the 18 stops that did make it on to the disc are highlighted with full motion video clips. Filmographies are included for stars Jacky Wu Jing, Christy Chung Lai-tai, and co-director Yuen Woo-ping and there are also made-for-video trailers for this and other Tai Seng DVDs. —JC



contrasts, and there are a handful of dropouts in the opening reel. However, the presentation is passable and the Greek subtitles are easily ignored. The running time at 24 fps would be 92m 13s. Midnight Video's edition of **ROBOWAR** is derived from a discontinued Japanese source. The transfer is a bit too dark (especially the opening reel), but the 1.75:1 image looks crisp and the mono sound is strong and effective. Japanese subtitles appear on the picture but are rarely a problem. The tape concludes with the Japanese theatrical trailer for Claudio Lattanzi's **KILLING BIRDS** (1987). —JC

## ENCOUNTER OF THE SPOOKY KIND

*Gwai da gwai (Cantonese)*

*Gui da gui (Mandarin)*

*"Ghost Strikes Ghost"*

1981, Tai Seng #61673

(Subtitled), #61663 (Dubbed),

HF/LB, \$59.95, 102m 1s

(Subtitled), 97m 53s (Dubbed)

Ask and you shall receive! In Issue #45's "Tapes from the Attic" section, we expressed our hope that this amazing Sammo Hung Kam-po horror/comedy would someday be released in widescreen. Faster than anyone could have expected, Tai Seng has issued both subtitled and dubbed versions, which differ slightly in terms of presentation. The scope framing on each greatly improves one's enjoyment of the kung fu, cinematography, and special effects, and makes portions of the film much easier to follow.

The subtitled tape (identified onscreen as **SPOOKY ENCOUNTERS AKA ENCOUNTER OF THE SPOOKY KIND**) measures 2.38:1 with new and improved subtitles on the lower matte. The music track is the same as the old Rainbow version: a collection of what

are apparently library tracks (credited to Chan Chun-chi), supplemented with cues lifted from **PHANTASM** and **HORROR EXPRESS**. The dubbed version (which has been converted from a PAL master and would run 102m 3s at 24 frames-per-second) is 2.31 and features different tracks, credited to Avalon Music Inc. We have seen the original version a number of times and are used to the music in it, but the tracks chosen for the English dub suit the film. The dubbing is mediocre at best (in a typically careless bit of translation, the name "Tsui" is pronounced "Chewy," though it should be "Choy") but that version is sharper and more detailed. The subbed tape has limited contrasts and is overly dark at times, while the dubbed version is usually too bright. The two editions are certainly presentable and major improvements over the cropped tape, but the ideal presentation would be something in between. Both tapes are a bit bass-heavy but sound passable. The onscreen title for the dubbed version is simply **SPOOKY ENCOUNTERS**. —JC

## THE EVIL DEAD

Anchor Bay #SV10588

(Collector's Edition), D/S/+, \$14.98

Anchor Bay #SV10605 (Limited

Edition), D/S/+, \$19.98

Anchor Bay #SV10587-E, -V,

-I, -L, D/S, NSR, VHS

1982, Elite Entertainment

#EE7263, DD/SS/+, \$39.98,

85m 6s, LD

Reissues of Sam Raimi's cult horror film **THE EVIL DEAD** [VW 46: 32-51] have become something of a cottage industry at Anchor Bay, with several different VHS editions now on the market, as well as the film's first-ever domestic laserdisc release, from Elite Entertainment.

Elite's laserdisc and Anchor Bay's various VHS editions all feature the same fullscreen transfer and 2m 2s theatrical trailer. Anchor Bay has released a basic "Collector's Edition" in a black plastic deluxe clamshell case, as well as a "Limited Edition" of 35,000, individually numbered copies in silver clamshell casing. Both of these feature a wrap-around jacket sleeve inserted in a clear plastic pocket affixed to the case, with liner notes by actor Bruce Campbell printed on the verso. The "Limited Edition" also includes a small, 32-page booklet titled **THE EVIL DEAD JOURNAL**, written by crew member Josh Becker, which reproduces the contents of a journal he kept during the shooting in Tennessee, along with rare color and B&W photos. The 2m 2s trailer is included following the feature. Finally, Anchor Bay has also released the film in a special "sell-through" edition with four different styles of cover art, whose catalog numbers end with a different letter of the alphabet: E, V, I and L. No trailer is included in these editions.

While the tapes have a remastered Dolby Surround track, the laserdisc has been remixed in 5.1 Dolby Digital. The sonic upgrade does allow for certain directional effects, and the surround sound is reasonably effective, but given the original source materials, is hardly worth the effort. Since the film has always been, in our minds, a model of guerilla filmmaking, the grandeur of Dolby Digital almost seems inappropriate. The picture on the Elite disc seems a tad dark, and is scarcely better than the picture on the VHS editions, which feature a slightly brighter look. The import laserdisc available from Japan (Cineasta #STLI-3001, CLV/CAV) provides a brighter, more detailed picture,

and remains the best realization of the film on disc to date.

If all this isn't enough, a CAV, 2-disc, gold plated laserdisc of **THE EVIL DEAD** has been promised by Elite after the first of the year, and an Anchor Bay DVD as well. For **EVIL DEAD** fans, famine has become a veritable feast. —R/SU

## THE FRIGHTENED WOMAN

### *Femina Ridens*

1969, First Run Features, HF/+, \$29.95, 86m 10s  
Jezebel Films #JEZ031, (UK-PAL), HF/LB, £12.99, 84m 39s (NTSC=88m16s)

One of the most strikingly designed Italian films of the 1960s, **THE FRIGHTENED WOMAN** (also released as **THE LAUGHING WOMAN** in some places) is a tale in erotic dominance and submission that thinly disguises a study in women's liberation panic. Philippe Leroy stars as Sayer, the director of a vast (and vaguely delineated) philanthropic organization, who—in a Bertollucian prelude—is introduced while firing an eyepatched employee (Varo Soleri) for embezzlement. When Maria (**HATCHET FOR THE HONEYMOON**'s Dagmar Lassander)—a journalist working for the organization—comes to Sayer for data to research an article called "Male Sterilization in India," they disagree strongly about the value of sterilization (she's for it, he's against it), but Maria commits to writing the article in accordance with her employer's views on the subject. Sayer invites Maria to his home, where he keeps his research data, and after she admires his gallery of drawings of deadly micro-organisms, he drugs and abducts her to his secret subterranean lounge retreat. Traumatized (and rendered impotent) by the childhood discovery

that female scorpions devour their mates after sex, Sayer is simultaneously attracted to and afraid of women, and he subjects Maria to a series of physical and psychological tortures, taking clinical and aesthetic pleasure in her fear. In time, he begins to understand her, and she begins to understand him, and true love blossoms—or does it?

Written and directed by Piero Schivazappa, and produced by Giuseppe Zaccariello (**A BAY OF BLOOD**), **THE FRIGHTENED WOMAN** is a frustrating picture to assess. On the one hand, it's a masterpiece of "Space Age Bachelor Pad" filmmaking (thanks to the JETSONS-meet-Pauline Réage art direction of Francesco Cuppini, and a great lounge score by Stelvio Cipriani); on the other, the film is much too obtuse, and even though the silly dialogue makes it impossible to take the first two-thirds too seriously, the third act bends too far in the opposite direction, and becomes risible. Leroy and

Lassander's first sexual encounter (in a pool) is filmed in the style of a Sergio Leone showdown, and it's followed by the bizarre spectacle of them romping (there's no other word for it) through the countryside in love, playing Hide and Seek, scurrying around, and taking pictures of each other. When Lassander takes advantage of a train crossing to give Leroy a blowjob, and a train passes by carrying a cargo of women joyously tooting woodwind instruments, the viewer is left unfavorably disoriented. Inconsistencies aside, the film contains at least a couple of sublime sequences: Lassander's near-nude dance around the pad to the tune of Cipriani's delicious main theme (which borrows heavily from the Rolling Stones' "Off the Hook"), and a mind-boggling shot of Leroy marching between the legs of a psychedelically painted sculpture of a woman's lower half, and through its vaginal portal, where a toothsome door closes behind him, then reopens to

