

By Trent Drake

(This column is a week late. It was stolen by the Phantom of the Poultry-House, a horribly disfigured turkey who hides his face behind a white porcelain mask. Smitten with lust for our managing editor Carol Schneider, the horrific fowl stole the disk containing her favourite X-Press feature in hopes of winning her love. Carol has since turned the misguided bird into Thanksgiving leftovers and returned the column to us.-- Editor)

This Week: Slightly belated Horror Hall of Shame!

Darkness has fallen, and can't get up. The full moon rises, a big white thing against the deep blue sky. And the creatures of the night, werewolves and vampires and demons (oh my!), begin to stalk like corn. A scream of terror, a wet sound, and red liquid gushes across the floor... and you know how hard it is to remove a ketchup stain. It's Hallowe'en (or it was, last week) and evil is throwing a wild party! And that means it's time for the annual Turkey Dinner Horror-a-thon! Three terrifying (or just plain gory) shocking-slosh slanders!

First up is the directorial debut of Stephen King, in the ever-popular **Maximum Overdrive**.

The story goes like this: a rogue comet, Rhea-M, suddenly appears and Earth passes through its tail. At first, nothing much happens... but then machines start running amok, causing terror and carnage. Lawn-mowers become people-mowers. Pop machines spit out cans at bullet-like velocity. Video games literally fry people's minds. Instant tellers insult

the director. And then, most terrifying of all, huge transfer trucks come to life and start flattening everything.

A small band of survivors gather at the Dixie Boy truck stop for protection. Stupid move! The trucks are angry... and thirsty. They lay siege to the diner until a ridiculous plot contrivance allows them to blow up a couple trucks and escape.

Acting (or Lack Thereof): The star of this film is supposedly Emilio Estevez, but he gets totally upstaged by the great supporting characters. Pat Hingle (I think) turns in a bravura performance as the redneck truckstop owner from the Boss Hog mold. And all of them get upstaged by an incredibly whiny but hilarious Yearly Smith (most famous for her Lisa Simpson). Her annoying little asides are so perfectly placed that she makes even the gore seem funny.

Stuff to Watch For: For the gore fans, there are plenty of splattery high-speed collisions. For the monster truck fans, there's the leader of the evil trucks: a big, black, toy-hauling rig with a huge, grinning Green Goblin head on the front grill. For heavy-metal fans, there's the background music by AC-DC. And for those of us who love over-the-top directing, King supplies us with neat camera angles and some really funny set pieces. A laughing bulldozer grinds a Chevy Malibu into dust. The Green Goblin truck appears to get a nosebleed. But my two favorite scenes come near the beginning of the film. In the first, a bank machine calls Stephen King an asshole.

And the second is a marvelous car wreck sequence that ensues when a drawbridge starts rising during rush hour with cars still on it... and if you look quick, there's a cameo by AC-DC! And is it just me, or are most of the smashed cars Chevrolets?

The Bottom Line: Watch it! It's great, sick fun for everyone, and while it won't make you whiz in your pants, it will make you paranoid about crossing the street... or going near your VCR to get the tape out. And that grinning black truck will haunt your dreams, I guarantee.

Available at: That's Entertainment, Belvedere Avenue location.

Would you go out and rent a horror movie just because Tawny Kitean was in it? You remember Tawny: the brunette co-host of *America's Funniest People* for the last two years? Would you rent a movie just to see her dead?

I did, and I got disappointed. Fortunately, there was plenty of other weird stuff in **Witchboard** to keep me happy.

A group of friends gather for a party. One of them brings a Ouija board, which is a medium for talking to spirits (for more info, read a dictionary). It so entrances one young woman (Tawny Kitean) that she starts using it when she's alone. Bad move! The spirit in the Ouija starts to take over her mind, using a campaign of terror to force her to keep using the board until he can possess her. Meanwhile, her friends have figured out what's happening to her. Setting aside old feuds and their disbelief, they investigate the spirit's origins to find a way to stop it... but they may already be

And finally, let's talk about my favorite creatures of the night, the werewolves. We get no respect, you know. While blood-sucking vampires hog the spotlight with their fine manners and leech-like dining habits, us lycanthropes are relegated to cheesy B-movies and endless *Howling* sequels. Makes you wish Lon Chaney Jr. was still around, don't it?

Well, after a long search, I finally found a movie that treats us with respect and even reverence. It's **Wolfen**, a low key, low profile horror flick that really creeps up on you.

When a wealthy industrialist, his wife, and his bodyguard are brutally murdered in a park, the police are baffled. No witnesses, no evidence, and no sign of struggle. The detective on the case (well played by Albert Finney) is even more confused when a similarly mutilated corpse shows up in a slum across town. He and his partner, a young female psychiatrist, wind their way through a twisted and baffling chain of evidence, false leads and spooky encounters before they finally confront the monsters responsible... and discover they themselves are equally monstrous.

Stuff To Watch For: I feel kind of guilty for lumping this movie in with a bunch of inferior films, but I just had to review it. The moody, rich direction builds a sense of horror even though there's less grue on display than usual, partly because of an intelligent and weird script. There's some gruesome and thought-provoking dialogue from the coroner about severed heads and other things too horrible to contemplate; some low-key but effective stalking sequences; stock footage of wolf shootings that'll get the environmentalist in you raging; a wonderfully nerdy little guy

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too late.

Tawny doesn't get killed. But she does get possessed by the spirit, who turns out to be an axe-murdering psycho. The scenes where she runs around swinging an axe are so hilarious they almost destroy the mood of the movie.

Stuff to Watch For: There's not as much blood in this film to keep gore-hounds happy, but there is a gruesome ketchup scene. Also watch for the spirit's locked door campaign, which helps build a mood of gradually creeping horror... which is almost completely destroyed by an unconvincing (but hilarious) beheading and clumsy directing in the climactic battle scene. And keep an eye out for the psychic investigator: picture, if you will, a cross between k.d. lang and Steve Urkel!

Bottom Line: I hate Ouija boards. They scare the hell out of me. What that means is, even with the bad acting, silly directing and stupid script, I still got a nasty scare out of this movie. If it wasn't for all the unintentional comedy, I'd have had nightmares for a week.

Available At: Plaza Video

with a wolf fetish; a gripping scene where Finney confronts a man who acts like a wolf, and some terrific animal acting in the climax.

If there's a sour note it's the special effects used for the wolfen's point of view. The computer colouring attempts to create a sense of wolfish night-vision but usually just succeeds in confusing the viewer during the chase scenes. It's also hard to build suspense in a stalking scene when you see it through the stalker's eyes.

Bottom Line: *Wolfen* is a good mystery and a satisfying horror movie. You'll have to watch it twice to understand all of it, but when you do you'll find yourself thinking... and that's a rare trait in any movie. Don't read the review on the tape case, it'll just wreck the movie. Enjoy!

Available at: Plaza Video

Next Week: Thud. Thud. Thud. THUD. THUD. **CRUNCH!** It's the long-awaited review of *Jurassic Park!*

Movie Review

Pulp Fiction

Directed by Quentin Tarantino
Starring John Travolta, Uma Thurman Samuel L. Jackson, Bruce Willis

After *Reservoir Dogs* and *True Romance*, Tarantino fans have been dying to see his next quirky saga of people so screwed up that it's impossible not to love them. Well, it's here-- in the form of *Pulp Fiction*. For an ordinary guy who used to work in a movie store, Tarantino has achieved some pretty impressive show-biz clout. Gathering stars and moulding them to fit into almost insane roles takes some talent. Actors such as Travolta, Jackson, and Willis owe big thanks to Tarantino for providing them with the most interesting roles they've had in ages. This dark, mesmerizing tale takes you on a fast ride and doesn't slow down; well, maybe enough to let you see John Travolta dance again.

The movie is actually shown in clips; short excerpts that intertwine with each other and overlap time frames. The film starts off with Vincent and Jules (your everyday normal LA hitmen) driving down the freeway, discussing what Big Macs are called in France. We find out that these two thugs have been hired to kill some punks who ripped off their boss's briefcase. So while engaging in rapid-fire, they exchange ideas on the relative cleanliness of pigs and dogs, and the significance of foot massages. Tarantino uses this scene like his playground-- he shapes it to fit his world, his view of what a mob hit should be like.

The second episode of the movie involves

Butch (Willis), who is ordered to throw a fight but instead keeps the money and tries to escape with his spaced-out girlfriend. Of all the characters in the movie, Butch is the sympathetic hero. He's the one you can cheer for without feeling any guilt or shame.

The third episode has the most comic content. We find Vincent and Jules dealing with a problem that (I feel safe in saying) is quite unique. After arriving in suburban LA, Tarantino finally makes his appearance (Tarantino always has a small role in his films). Enter Winston Wolf (Harvey Keitel), who helps the boys clean up their mess and sends them merrily on their way.

Pulp Fiction keeps you guessing every step of the way. You always think you know the boundaries a director won't cross in a film. However, Tarantino crosses these borders and makes new ones, and then crosses those. The characters are so well-written that you become intoxicated with them. Their dialogue is so thick with f---s that it almost becomes poetic. The pleasure of the film is that you never know what these nuts will do next.

The real star of *Pulp Fiction* is Tarantino, for his undisciplined filmmaking technique; however, the movie's best acting comes from Jackson. With his silly hair and hollow eyes, his performance is the heart and soul of *Pulp Fiction*. Jackson plays a man trying not to be bad but who can't help it; just like Quentin Tarantino.

(A-)

-- David Ramsay

