

Slice 'em and dice 'em flicks can't compare with classics

By MARY McWHORTER

Movie Reviewer

I remember my first horror movie well, "The Monster of Boggy Creek." It was a cheapie about Bigfoot. All I can remember was slowly slinking further and further into my seat, until I finally rested under it. My mother promptly removed me from the theater and for the next week I blackmailed my parents into letting me sleep with them. (I was sure Bigfoot would come crashing through my closet door). As you have probably construed, I was a wimpy child. I shudder to think how I'd fare at the slasher movies shown today.

In fact, I still won't go see those slice 'em and dice 'em features. They aren't real horror movies. They're something akin to exploitative pornography and they lack any artistic or creative expression.

They also lack class. Horror movies with class? Of course. One of the first horror movies "Nosferatu," a 1922, silent, black and white, vam-

pire flick, has become a classic example of German expressionism. The film is remarkable in that it creates a succession of haunting visual images that are authentically "expressive" of horror. For example, Nosferatu is photographed from extremely low angles to make him appear monstrous and sinister. (Orson Welles used the same technique eighteen years later in "Citizen Kane"). Also, a number of shots used lighting to cast the vampire's gigantic shadow across every object in the frame, (a minor blunder, a vampire casts no shadows, as all horror buffs know). Although this movie is a bit creaky, the techniques it pioneered are widely used in movies today. And for those interested, "Nosferatu" was remade by a great German director, Werner Herzog, in 1978.

Now that we know a little of the history of horror films, let's get nostalgic. For starters, how about those oldies but goodies. Horror, American style. Bela Lugosi's "Dracula" (1931) comes to mind. Boris Karloff's "Frankenstein" (1931), "Bride of Frankenstein" (1935), "The Mask of

Fu Manchu" (1932) and "The Mummy" (1932) are classics to this day. And let's not forget Lon Chaney's "The Phantom of the Opera" or Lon Chaney Jr.'s "The Wolf Man" (1941). How about Peter Lorre? The villain you couldn't quite make yourself hate. And Claude Rains gets an honorable mention for "The Invisible Man" (1933), his first feature film, and he never even got to show his face.

What makes these movies so great? Class. They all feature great character actors who sometimes broke out of the horror genre and went on to establish careers with a broader range of roles. But even if they were typecast as freaks or monsters, they were recognized as innovative actors who could establish and maintain a character under all the makeup.

Probably the most successful of all these actors is the invincible Vincent Price. His list of credits is practically endless but my favorite is his despicable character Dr. Phibes in "The Abominable Dr. Phibes" (1971) and "Dr. Phibes Rises Again." Now these

are real horror films. They're creative works of genius. The films mainly concern themselves with Dr. Phibes creating new and interesting ways to kill people he feels are responsible for his wife's death. In one movie he squeezes a man to death with a giant vise as the man sleeps in a cot, much like a grape. Nasty, huh? But it's different, you have to admit. And that's my point. At least I'm not watching an endless parade of idiotic people being killed with butcher knives and ice picks and skewers and chain saws and axes by faceless villains for no reason. Not only is that revolting, but it gets a little boring after awhile. After all, how many different ways can people bleed to death?

Much to my dismay, these thoughtless movies keep making lots of money. And the movie people respond by making more of these thoughtless movies. As for me, I'm just going to stay home and watch for reruns of "Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein" on the late late show and make sure my closet door is shut before I go to bed. □

movies -

RATING KEY

***** = A Classic!
**** = Excellent, but has some flaws.

*** = Okay, but not that great.
** = Barely watchable.
* = Forget it.

- movies

A PASSAGE TO INDIA (PG): This film portrays the conflict between Britain and its colony, India. Judy Davis plays a Briton visiting her fiance in India. Set in India, the film won two Oscars in 1984. Aggie Cinema, Friday and Saturday, 7:30, Rudder Theater.

AFTER HOURS (R): Martin Scorsese's new black comedy is here. It involves the adventures of a young man after he gets off of work. **** Plaza 3

AGNES OF GOD (PG-13): A young nun gives birth to a baby. Later, the baby is found strangled. Agnes says she doesn't remember the birth or the impregnation. Meg Tilly from "The Big Chill" is Sister Agnes in this film that deals with the confrontation of faith and reason. Anne Bancroft and Jane Fonda also star. **** Plaza 3

AMADEUS (PG): A loosely biographical film about composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Swept the Oscars last year. Plaza 3

APPOINTMENT WITH FEAR (R): A Halloween thriller from the producers of "Halloween." Schulman 6

BACK TO THE FUTURE (R): This is the most fun to hit the silver screen this year. Michael J. Fox, from TV's "Family Ties," stars in this time-traveling comedy. ***** Cinema 3

BEVERLY HILLS COP (R): Here it is again. Eddie Murphy makes this flick a winner. **** Schulman 6

COMMANDO (R): It's Arnold Schwarzenegger in a Chuck Norris movie. This is an action-adventure flick where Schwarzenegger must assassinate a South American president in order to recover his (Schwarzenegger's) kidnapped daughter from the clutches of one of his former special operations strike

force members who has tracked Schwar... Oh, never mind. This movie shouldn't be too bad. Arnold actually gets to say something. Cinema 3

COMPROMISING POSITIONS (R): Susan Sarandon stars as a housewife who is so shocked by the murder of her dentist she decides to turn reporter and investigate the case herself. This movie is a strange, but not uninteresting, comedy of life in suburbia. *** Schulman 6

HOLLYWOOD OUT-TAKES AND RARE FOOTAGE (UNRATED): A collection of archival clips, snips and cutting room bloopers, from Marilyn Monroe's home movies to driving tips from James Dean. Full of surprises. Aggie Cinema, Friday and Saturday, midnight, Rudder Theater.

INVASION USA (R): Oh dear. Another "Chuck Norris saves the world" movie. Much to my chagrin this movie has been getting decent reviews. Supposedly, it's full of exciting action scenes and Norris' superb acting. No comment. Cinema 3

JAGGED EDGE (R): A mystery-thriller starring Glenn Close ("The Big Chill") and Jeff Bridges ("Starman.") A beautiful and wealthy San Francisco newspaper heiress is stabbed to death and the only suspect is her husband. **** Pos: Oak Mall

MARIE (PG-13): Sissy Spacek stars in this true story of a woman who works to rid Tennessee's government of corruption. Manor East III

MY UNCLE ANTOINE (UNRATED): A study of life, death, fear and desire, this Canadian film features a 15-year-old boy coming of age in a small mining town. Aggie Cinema, Sunday, 7:30, Rudder Theater.

PEE-WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE (PG): A wacky comedy starring comedian Pee-Wee Herman. See at your own risk. ** Schulman 6

REMO WILLIAMS: THE ADVENTURE BEGINS (PG-13): Kung Fu meets Yoda. Not only is this movie a ripoff of "The Karate Kid," its title infers the producers expect this movie to make so much money they have already planned sequels. The story revolves around a New York City cop (Remo) who is recruited by a secret organization to be trained by the last living master of Sinanju. What is Sinanju? It is the sun source of the survival arts, of course. Post Oak Mall

SILVER BULLET (R): Another Stephen King story hits the silver screen. This one is about a werewolf, if you haven't already guessed by the title. I sincerely hope this movie is better than previous King movie-adaptations. Schulman 6

SILVERADO (PG-13): Ye-Ha! A shoot-em-up if there ever was one. This western revolves around four cowboys that fight off bad guys, protect innocent folks and generally do good deeds. **** Manor East III

SWEET DREAMS (PG-13): Jessica Lange stars as the country music legend Patsy Cline. This movie traces the life of Cline including her recovery from a terrible car wreck and her death in a plane crash. Post Oak Mall

TEEN WOLF (PG): Oh no! Here it is again. Michael J. Fox of "Family Ties" turns into a werewolf and becomes his high school basketball champ. (No Stars). Manor East III

VOLUNTEERS (R): A comedy starring Tom Hanks and John Candy. Hanks decides to join the Peace Corps to hide from an irate bookie he owes money to. Schulman 6