

BLOOD SEX & SCOOBY SNACKS

By Ian Watson

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(Not the filmmaker, the fast food employee)

Few realize, but every movie playing your local multiplex began as a drunken bet. Adam Sandler's latest picture is his forfeit for being unable to walk a straight line with a glass balanced on his head while saying the alphabet backwards. Sylvester Stallone's last movie came about during a pissing contest. Tom Cruise's new film? You don't want to know.

It used to be so simple. Poor, stupid people went to see whatever was playing and enjoyed it, whatever it was, because there was no internet or VCRs or television and everyone had dysentery. Then those inventions came along and everything changed. The multiplex became a sewer, and we were all dodging *Showgirls*.

By the late 90s, the world had already been ravaged by the likes of *Waterworld*, *Independence Day* and *Batman & Robin*, was coming to terms with *Speed 2: Cruise Control*, *Godzilla* and *Spiceworld*, and was bracing itself for *The Phantom Menace*, *The Haunting* and *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*. How could things possibly get worse?

Two words: Michael Bay.

In 2001, the director of *Armageddon*, a movie that wiped out the dinosaurs and destroyed New York *in the first fifteen minutes*, delivered *Pearl Harbor* to multiplexes. In case you missed it, this was Bay's attempt to retell the events of December 7, 1941, from the bomb's point of view. More importantly, it was the year he co-founded Platinum Dunes, his production company, and scholars still debate which event caused the most devastation.

The company's remit was simple: low-budget horror remakes from no-name directors with backgrounds similar to Bay. Horror had provided a dependable revenue stream for New Line (*A Nightmare On Elm Street*), Miramax (*Scream*) and Dark Castle (*House On Haunted Hill*), and with a commercials guy at the helm, the resulting pictures, beginning with *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, looked like Mini-Me versions of Bay's movies. It was the perfect formula and it paid off in spades, with *Chainsaw* raking in over \$100m on a \$9m budget.

It also proved, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Michael Bay is a soulless cocksucker who must be stopped for the love of God before he turns us all into Pod People.

Trust me, I know. I share the sumbitch's name. Unlike him, I rattle the fryer at a McD's in Newark, New Jersey. Every time he opens a new movie, people throw garbage at me and shout, "Michael Bay, you suck!" Then they go to see the movie anyway.

What those people fail to realize is that my namesake and I are in the same business. Neither of us is making art. We are selling a product.

It turns out Bill Hicks was right: there *is* an Elite that controls all the Corporations, and their agenda is to keep people stupid, docile and apathetic. That's why the Corporations now control all the movie companies, who in turn control everything we see. They replaced original ideas with brands and franchises, substituted celebrities for actors and gave us Showbiz Correspondents instead of journalists.

At this point, you may be thinking, "Mike, that's great and all, but isn't this a book about a cartoon dog? Also, I noticed the word 'Sex' in the title. Will there be titty or was that just a marketing gimmick?"

Patience, Gentle Reader, for all will be revealed. However, if you really like animals and tits, don't miss the porn films of Jose Mojica Marins (aka Coffin Joe), the first director to shoot a sex scene between a woman and a dog. Asked how he felt about his achievement, Marins replied, "Rough, rough."

But this is not a book about cartoons, canines or inter-species erotica. This is a book about how creative bankruptcy reduced horror movies to the level of *Scooby Doo! Where Are You?* It is a tale of Corporate Greed and Soulless Product, for which there is no better poster boy than Michael Bay. He makes only a cursory appearance in the text, but his presence is deeply felt.

So if you grew up watching *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *The Hitcher*, *A Nightmare On Elm Street* or *Friday The 13th* and were numbed by the remakes, this is the book for you. On the other hand, if you saw *Freddy Vs Jason* and thought "Rocks!"....kill yourself. We are better, more unique creatures than this and those that worship at the altar of banality are on some level responsible for the Michael Bays of this planet. Don't go to your grave having helped unleash vile garbage on the world, just go straight to your grave. Swallow some pills, step in front of a truck, blow your head off....I don't care

how you do it, just remove yourself from the gene pool and allow those of us that wish to evolve to multiply while your sorry breed disappears from the Earth.

Before we get *Freddy Vs Transformers 3D*.

Michael Bay

Newark, NJ

September 2013

Say you've been sucked through the screen at your local plex, but unlike that kid in Last Action Hero, you haven't been transported into a Schwarzenegger movie. You don't know where the hell you are. But there's an old timer up ahead and he's hollering at a bunch of teenagers that if they don't turn around and go back, if they don't skedaddle toot sweet, they're gonna be sorry. And, by the way, don't go near the Miller place after dark.

Uh oh. The local prophet of doom, a handful of kids and a creepy location. That means you're either in a horror movie or that episode of Scooby Doo! Where Are You? where the Mystery Machine arrives in this ghost town, and instead of helping the others, Shaggy and Scooby sneak off in search of food but a monster chases them so Fred devises a plan and they set a trap but it fails and leads to a climactic chase that ends with Scooby colliding with the villain, who's then unmasked as....

Come to think of it, that's every episode.

Anyway, you can't tell where you are, and even looking at the cast doesn't tell you much because it's two attractive leads, a nerd, a stoner plus a brown-skinned comic relief character who speaks in a peculiar dialect, eats watermelon and shows more interest in "Scooby snacks" than the ladies. Then there's the dialogue. Whenever somebody finds themselves trapped, they say, "We're trapped!" Upon entering a haunted house, they say, "This place is spooky!" There's also the Talking Villain scene, where the culprit gives a speech explaining his sinister scheme, which he might've gotten away with if it hadn't been for those meddling kids and their damn dog.

Scientists, Mayors, college Deans, police officers and, now you mention it, pretty much every other person in a position of authority, right down to the parents, cannot be trusted. Also, the Sheriff is either unhelpful, corrupt or thoroughly evil, and probably has a dark secret. Also a Deputy dumb enough to deny the monster's existence without first looking over his shoulder. Although that's no guarantee that he's not the villain.

You see, our more-evil-than-Enron fiend will, for most of the running time, appear where and when he damn well pleases, and to hell with logic. In his presence, power supplies will fail and cars refuse to start. Characters will wander alone down dark corridors saying, "Hello?" Fire exits will be mysteriously blocked.

And if you're thinking of phoning a friend and saying please oh please get me out of this movie, forget it. The phones don't work. And there's a thunderstorm moving in.

Then, as you run out of fuel and hike through the middle of nowhere in the dead of night, searching for a gas station that isn't operated by Brad Dourif, the thought occurs: how did it come to this?

It all started when Nixon was in the White House, the Manson Family were at large and Vietnam was more than just a talking point. Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy had been assassinated, and if you hadn't yet figured out times were changing, then a controversial new film called *Midnight Cowboy*, the first X-rated movie to win Best Picture, would change your mind.

Into this muddled-up, mixed-up world came four teenagers named Geoff, Kelly, Linda and WW, who roamed the country with their sheepdog, Too Much. Or they would have, if CBS executive Fred Silverman hadn't nixed the idea for a show called *Mysteries Five*. He wanted a series that would repeat the ratings success of *The Archie Show* as well as placate parent-led pressure groups that considered Saturday morning television too violent, so between them, Silverman, writers Joe Ruby and Ken Spears, plus animator Iwao Takamoto came up with *Who's S-S-Scared?*, whose teens were modelled on characters from CBS's previous comedy hit, *The Many Loves Of Dobie Gillis*.

Though based on Dobie himself, Fred Jones, the group's self-appointed hero/leader, would've been more familiar to teenaged viewers as the square-jawed protagonist who battled Blobs, mad scientists and rubber-suited monsters at the Drive-in every Saturday night. His supposed girlfriend, Daphne Blake, had the token damsel-in-distress role while her considerably less attractive (and feminine looking) classmate Velma Dinkley, a near-sighted bookworm, could lecture for hours on such topics as runic symbols, palaeontology, Viking history etc. Along for the ride, as well as provide comic relief, was Norville 'Shaggy' Rogers, a long-haired, unshaven coward based on Bob Denver's *Dobie* character, Maynard G. Krebs, primetime's first beatnik. Rounding out the line-up was Mystery Incorporated's mascot, a talking Great Dane whose name came not from Sacha Distel's 1958 hit *Scoubidou* or even Frank Sinatra's dooby-dooby-dooing on *Strangers In The Night*, but *Denise* by Randy And The Rainbows, which Blondie later covered as *Denis*.

CBS President Frank Stanton rejected *Who's S-S-Scared?* for being too scary for its intended audience, so Silverman, determined to revitalize his Saturday morning schedule, changed the title and toned down the material, which was apparently enough to obtain the necessary greenlight. In other words, *Scooby Doo! Where Are You?* came into existence because it was safe, formulaic and unlikely to tax an eight-year-old overmuch.

When *What A Night For A Knight* was broadcast on September 13, 1969, *Scooby Doo!* hardly seemed like a show that would still be around, in one incarnation or another, some five decades later. Viewed today, the most striking thing is how little the show departed from the blueprint laid down by its debut episode. Shaggy's bell-bottoms, the Mystery Machine, the chase and climactic unmasking are all present and correct. Even after umpteen different series, two big budget feature films, plus a slew of straight-to-DVD titles as well as specials, spin-offs and spoofs, Fred still wears his lucky Ascot, Daphne's favourite colour is still purple and Velma remains an aficionado of chunky sweaters. If a show with mediocre animation, lame dialogue and recycled plots can enjoy massive success, even the most hopeless filmmakers can take heart.

Lured into filmmaking by *Glen Or Glenda* producer George Weiss, Michael and Roberta Findlay unleashed on 42nd Street audiences some of the most inept and primitive sexploitation films of the '60s before entering the horror genre with *The Slaughter* (1971), which was later distributed as the notorious *Snuff* ("A film that could only be made in South America, where life is cheap!"). By 1972, the husband and wife team had fallen in with director Ed Adlum for *Invasion Of The Blood Farmers*, where dungaree-clad 'Druids' in straw hats eat dogs, exsanguinate their victims in a garden shed and murder a character named Jim Carrey. World-beatingly terrible in all departments, from Roberta's blurry cinematography to Michael's unique editing style (which leaves in shots of actors waiting for their cue), the film failed to recoup its \$24,000 budget on release, so when the trio regrouped for *Shriek Of The Mutilated* (1974), it was with Adlum as producer and Michael as director, which at least cut down on the mix of day/night shots.

It's probably going out on a limb to describe *Shriek* as the first horror film to rip off Hanna-Barbera, but consider the storyline. When Dr Prell recruits four students – including a leggy clotheshorse, a redhead with oversized glasses, a cool-headed jock and a joker – for an expedition to find a Yeti in upstate New York (why not?), they travel to an isolated cabin in a van with flower decals on the side, encounter a mute, sinister housekeeper and are chased by a silly-looking creature whose appearance causes the redhead to fall and lose her glasses. After setting a trap that fails, the 'monster' is revealed to be one Dr Werner in a costume, who along with Prell has been perpetuating the Yeti myth to draw attention away from their nefarious schemes that, in this R-rated version, include luring young people to a deserted locale so the flesh-eating academics can devour them.

Okay, so the filmmakers probably didn't sit down and say to each other, "You know what'd make lots of money? *Scooby Doo* with tits!" They were more likely cashing in on the Drive-in success of *The Legend Of Boggy Creek* (1972), which proved the box-office potential of a cheaply-made man-in-a-suit monster movie, and the similarities to the show worked their way in. Which they were bound to do, because quick-buck exploitation reduces everything to the level of a cartoon.

Hacks aren't skilled enough to write scripts so they recycle clichés. They can't create characters so they rely on 'types': the hero/leader; the damsel-in-distress; the brainy girl; the comic relief. You can tell who's who just by looking at them.

Moral: bad intentions result in worse pictures, especially if you're a porn grad looking to get rich.

Which is also true of *Friday The 13th*.

Having gained notoriety first as the director of *Together* ("Finally, an X-rated picture your wife or girlfriend can enjoy!"), then as the producer of *The Last House On The Left*, Sean S Cunningham turned out a string of flops before calling his friend Victor Miller in the summer of 1979 and saying, "*Halloween* is making a lot of money. Why don't we rip it off?" Nobody who sought to imitate John Carpenter's film did so because they admired its sophistication but because the \$325,000 movie grossed \$18,500,000 in North America alone, making it one of the most commercially successful independent films of the decade. Cunningham may not have been the first prospector at the site, but he was the next one to strike gold; when Paramount released *Friday* in May 1980, the \$500,000 quickie grossed \$5.8m in its first three days. Of the studio's pictures that year, only *Urban Cowboy* and *Airplane!* made more money.

For all its massive success, though, *Friday*'s most interesting aspects are what it blatantly copies (title, opening sequence, basic premise) and what it's too unsophisticated to even attempt (widescreen cinematography, hiring name actors, slow-burn suspense). Every hoary cliché worked its way into Miller's script: the scenic town with a Dark Past; the Prophet of Doom; the Comically Unhelpful Cop; the Car That Won't Start; the Climactic Thunderstorm; the Talking Villain; the It-Was-Only-A-Dream Scene. You get a fair idea of what you're in for when a camper approaches a dog and asks, "Do you speak English?"

Also, the fact that *Friday* was distributed by a major studio (rather than an independent outfit, as *Shriek* and *Halloween* were) cannot be overstated. Its success proved you didn't need big stars, expensive effects or an Oscar-winning script based on a worldwide bestseller to enjoy a monster hit, just a good ol' Drive-in movie that played to necking teenagers. This was ironic: Drive-ins, the home of B-grade horror, were in decline, and as multiplexes began inheriting their audiences – those that hadn't been lost to VHS – studios catered for them with pictures that were slick, calculated and more than a little cartoonish.

All the 'murders' in Paramount's *April Fool's Day*, for instance, turn out to have been staged by rich girl Muffy St Clair, who plans to turn her home into a country inn that holds murder weekends with fake cops, fake clues and fake corpses. Scarcely more believable is the villain in *Friday The 13th Part V: A New Beginning*, who's dressing up as Jason Voorhees to avenge his son, or the Sheriff in *Slumber Party Massacre II* who tells a group of meddling kids, "You jerk my chain in my town and I'll rip your goddamn lungs out!" And we can't forget *A Nightmare On Elm Street 2: Freddy's Revenge* with its homoerotic subtext.

The 90s temporarily retired Freddy(in 3D!), sent Jason to Hell, shot Pinhead into space and linked Michael Myers to the Druids, so it was a relief when *Scream* arrived, but anyone who tells you that Wes Craven's landmark movie changed the genre for the better is sadly mistaken. It was *Halloween* redux, the big success that opened the door for a series of laughably bad clones and rip-offs. No picture that considers itself 'hip' and 'self-aware' should be a remake, have a character named 'Creepy Janitor' or be produced by Michael Bay. Also, no more casting of Brad Dourif as the Weird Stranger, okay?

Things came full circle with Raja Gosnell's live-action *Scooby Doo* (2002), whose casting gave horror fans a few chuckles. Freddie Prinze Jr had played a very Fred Jones-ish hero/leader in *I Know What You Did Last Summer* and its sequel, while his wife, Sarah Michelle Gellar, couldn't set foot on a horror film set without being chased by a masked villain (*Scream 2*), creepy kids (*The Grudge*) or a sinister fisherman (*I Know What You Did Last Summer*). Linda Cardellini's smart girl was appropriately taken for granted in *Strangeland*, while Matthew Lillard had been playing Shaggy for years in *Scream*, *Dead Man's Curve* and *13 Ghosts* (or *Thir13en Ghosts*, whatever), and would be playing him for years afterwards, voicing the character on numerous DVD movies as well as the *Scooby Doo: Mystery Incorporated* series.

Hollywood might be run by Devil worshippers, but they're not without a sense of humour....

PART I

UNMASKING THE VILLAIN

URBAN LEGEND (1998)

“It Happened To Someone Who Knows Someone You Know....You’re Next!”

Directed by Jamie Blanks; Written by Silvio Horta; Produced by Neal H Moritz, Michael McDonnell & Gina Matthews.

MEDDLING KIDS:

Paul (Jared Leto) is The Hero/leader

Natalie (Alicia Witt) is The Damsel In Distress

Michelle (Natasha Gregson Wagner) is The Doomed Best Friend

Tosh (Danielle Harris) is The Goth

Parker (Michael Rosenbaum) is The Wiseass

Sasha (Tara Reid) is The Bimbo

Damon (Joshua Jackson) is The Practical Joker

UNHELPFUL ADULTS

Reese (Loretta Devine) The Security Guard

Wexler (Robert Englund) The Sinister Professor

Adams (John Neville) The Dean

Michael (Brad Dourif) The Creepy Gas Station Owner

VILLAIN:

Brenda Bates (Rebecca Gayheart)

When someone starts killing the students at “Pendleton University” using urban legends, who you gonna cast? How about tall, slender redhead Alicia Witt and handsome, square-jawed Jared Leto, who even when they’re not being surprised by a Weird Janitor, chased by a Hooded Figure or investigating suspects that have ‘Red Herring’ written all over them, will remind you more of Daphne and Fred than Sarah Michelle Gellar and Freddie Prinze Jr did.

Like your fright flicks to be lightweight and ultra-hokey? Say hello to your new favourite movie. Being an ersatz *Scream*, *Urban Legend* opens with a recognizable face – *Lost Highway*’s Natasha Gregson Wagner, who by the way is the daughter of Natalie Wood – being sliced and diced before the credits, but whereas Wes Craven engaged us with suspense and credible-enough situations, nobody appears to have told Jamie Blanks he *wasn’t* making a Saturday morning cartoon, so when Wagner runs low on fuel (during a thunderstorm, at night, middle of nowhere etc.) she of course stops at a gas station operated by.....Brad Dourif. Hunched over, with stringy grey hair, a stutter and more nervous tics than a pirate whose caffeine intake should be closely monitored, Brad’s dry run for the part of Wormtongue in *Lord Of The Rings* is enough to convince Wagner to make her excuses etc, after which Dourif finally spits out what he’d been trying to say all along: “There’s someone on the back seat!”

Yes, they start the movie with that old wheeze, having dusted it off since its appearance in *Nightmares* (1983), whose makers at least had the decency not to include *Total Eclipse Of The Heart* (“Turn a-round...”) on the soundtrack. Before another pinhead can be whacked, though, Professor Robert Englund (gee, do you think he’ll be a suspect?) reminds us of the title with a folklore class where he disproves the commonly held belief that mixing Pepsi and Pop Rocks (“They crackle in your mouth,” says a helpful student) will cause your intestines to explode. If you actually tried this as a kid (we did), then you’re way ahead of this group, who react with sheer terror when the class clown pretends to go into convulsions, leading to the immortal line: “He’s gonna explode! Somebody call 911!”

Speaking of hokey, don’t miss the scene where Witt finds the words “Aren’t You Glad You Didn’t Turn On The Light?” sprayed on the wall above her roommate’s body, which the Dean dismisses as “a very morbid suicide note” before suggesting that another missing student might be shackled up in a motel with a farmyard animal (see what we mean about unhelpful?) With that attitude, you might expect him to be overruled by the indomitable head of security that,

alas, turns out to be the comic relief. When she isn't wandering onto a crime scene without noticing the pooled blood until it's too late or doing a 'hilarious' bug-eyed double-take, Reese speaks the kind of penned-by-a-white-dude dialogue that'll be familiar to fans of her idol, Pam Grier, whose moves she attempts to mimic in between failing to notice the mounting death toll. The film's token African-American, her underwritten role could fairly be called shallow, lame, demeaning, and humiliating, but if you think its *racist*, get a load of the sequel, *Urban Legends: Final Cut*.

With such a lowly role, Reese must of course fail to save Witt from loony Rebecca Gayheart, who's been using urban legends to take revenge on those responsible for her boyfriend's death (plus a few innocents besides), but she does manage to buy our heroine enough time to overpower Gayheart, who's then shot twice, thrown through a window, sent through a windshield at high speed and drowned, yet still manages to return for a "Scooby Dooby Dooooo" moment – with her hair perfectly intact.

ZOINKS!

In the end titles, there are credits for such characters as "Weird Janitor", "Hippie Guy", "Trendy Girl", "Nerdy Guy" and "Bitchy Girl".

YOU CAN IMAGINE A CARTOON CHARACTER SAYING....

Damon: "Hootie's gonna pierce his nose!"

Natalie: "Hootie's a dog, Damon."

Damon: "That's no reason why he can't be hip."

OR:

Dean Adams (after Witt has discovered her roommate's body): "It appears to be a tragic.....suicide."

OR:

Parker: "Damon is the biggest practical joker I know. He once convinced a Sophomore he was the middle Hanson brother just so that he could get laid."

OR:

Natalie: "Brenda, you need help."

Brenda: "I have already tried therapy! Obviously, it did me no good."

OR:

Reese (to Brenda): "Get up against the wall, you loony psycho bitch!"

OR:

Reese: "I'm having trouble locating another student, a boy named Damon Brooks. He's been missing for some days now."

Dean Adams: "Missing? He's not missing. It's the weekend! He's probably shacked up in some motel with a girl. Or a guy. Farmyard animal, whatever. Weren't you ever eighteen?"

Reese: "Not *that* kinda eighteen!"

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

In *The Dynamic Scooby Doo Affair*, Mystery Incorporated teamed up with Batman and Robin (why not?) to stop a villain known as the Hooded Figure, who's also revealed to be a woman. Mrs Baker had joined forces with The Penguin and The Joker (why not?) for a counterfeiting scheme, and just like poor old Rebecca Gayheart, she's unmasked in an abandoned building following a chase. Then the gang enjoy some Bat Snacks, Scooby says "Scooby Dooby Dooooo!", everybody laughs etc.

SCREAM 3 (2000)

“The Third And Final Chapter In The Trilogy That Made You Laugh, And Made You Scream!”

Directed by Wes Craven; Written by Ehren Kruger; Produced by Cathy Konrad, Marianne Maddalena and Kevin Williamson.

MEDDLING KIDS

Sidney (Neve Campbell) is The Damsel In Distress

Sarah (Jenny McCarthy) is The Bimbo

Angelina (Emily Mortimer) is The Red Herring

Tyson (Deon Richmond) is The Token Black Guy

Cotton (Liev Schreiber) The Doomed Survivor From The Previous Film

UNHELPFUL ADULTS

Dewey (David Arquette) The Deputy

Gail (Courteney Cox) The Reporter

Kincaid (Patrick Dempsey) The Detective

Jennifer (Parker Posey) The Actress

Milton (Lance Henriksen) The Creepy Producer

Stone (Patrick Warburton) The Ill-Fated Bodyguard

VILLAIN

Roman (Scott Foley)

“I’ve heard this shit before!” Sidney Prescott tells *Scream 3*’s Talking Villain, and as he attempts to explain the painfully contrived plot to her, it’s hard to disagree. Actually, that’s kind of harsh because sequel #2 has had an upgrade, or at least the killer’s voice scrambler has. He can now impersonate a member of the opposite sex or a specific cast member, which considering how verbose the guy is, probably wasn’t a bad idea.

If you don’t remember, and there’s no reason why you should, *Scream 3* takes place on the set of *Stab 3*, the third movie based on the events in *Scream*, so there’s lots of ‘clever’ post-modern blather about trilogies and boy does it fall flat. Apparently, the “rules” dictate that the final part of a trilogy must have a superhuman killer, a dark secret that returns to haunt the heroine and when it comes to which characters survive, all bets are off.....but in an overcrowded market, that’s every other movie. Take *Urban Legends: Final Cut* (please), which was also confined to a movie set, had a failed director murder The Blonde Bimbo and The Funny Black Guy and tried concealing its creakiness with lots of smart talk. It was released in September 2000 – seven months after *Scream 3*.

It’s too bad Dimension Films didn’t learn from the *Alien* saga and bring in a new director and new cast members because as another costumed villain chases familiar faces through a mansion with revolving walls and one-way mirrors, ol’ Ghostface becomes a Scooby villain, capable of appearing where he chooses and surviving knife and gunshot wounds because.....oh, let’s say he was wearing Kevlar or something. The film’s idea of clever is having the killer chase Sidney through *Stab 3*’s set, but as he survives numerous falls, being shot, stabbed etc, you’ll be reminded of Dimension’s *other* masked killer movie from that year. It was called *Scary Movie*.

It’s not just the characters who know all the clichés yet get trapped in them anyway – the film also gets tangled up. For all its attempts to tell us how self-aware it thinks it is, there’s a hokey it-was-only-a-dream sequence, a bunch of starlets that wander off by themselves, a Token Black Guy In A Red Shirt and when chasing the culprit through an eerie mansion, of course you have to split up. Then there’s the killer’s identity: not only is it some guy that died earlier in the film, but he’s Sidney’s evil half-brother come to kick ass and carve up anyone with a tenuous connection to the previous films. He would’ve gotten away with it too, if it hadn’t been for those meddling bitches.

Throughout the film, Sidney and Gail are referred to as “Nancy Drew” or “Lois Lane”, but nobody thinks to use the more fitting “Danger-prone Daphne”, which is probably just as well because co-star Patrick Warburton also voices Sheriff Bronson Stone on *Scooby Doo Mystery Incorporated*. His character here, by the way, is named Steven Stone. These things are not an accident, people.

ZOINKS!

Come to think of it, you will not find a franchise with more actors in common with those meddling kids than *Scream*. Not only were Matthew ‘Shaggy’ Lillard and Sarah Michelle ‘Daphne’ Gellar polished off in the first two instalments, but David Warner, Lewis Arquette (both *Scream 2*) and Hayden Panattiere (*Scream 4*) all lent their respective vocal talents to *What’s New Scooby Doo?*, *A Pup Named Scooby Doo* and *Scooby Doo And The Goblin King*.

YOU CAN IMAGINE A CARTOON CHARACTER SAYING....

Dewey: “Was that a threat, Detective?”

Kincaid: “When it’s a threat, you’ll know it.”

Dewey: “Was *that* a threat?”

OR

Dewey: “If I thought like a homicidal maniac then I’d know how a homicidal maniac thinks!”

OR

Kincaid: “I know what it’s like to see ghosts that don’t go away, to be watching a scary movie in your head.....watching it alone.”

Sidney: “Ghosts are tough. You can’t shoot ghosts.”

OR

Sidney: “Do you know why you kill people, Roman? Do you?”

Roman: “I don’t want to hear it!”

Sidney: “Because you choose to. There is no one else to blame.”

Roman: “God fucking damnit!”

OR

Roman: “I’m gonna check this place out.”

Tyson: “Whoa, whoa, just wait one damn minute! There’s a psycho killer on the loose and you wanna go traipsing around this gigantic mansion? Have you actually seen the *Stab* movies? Every time this dude enters a room he ends up a goddamn shish kebab!”

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

In *The Chiller Diller Movie Thriller*, Scooby’s cousin, Scooby Dee, is set to play the lead in a remake of *The Phantom Of Dixie* when she starts receiving threatening letters apparently written by Milo Booth, the long-dead star of the original movie. When Booth’s ghost appears, he attempts to dognap Dee and replace her with an impostor, but he’s eventually caught and unmasked as Jim Moss, the studio’s head of security, who’d planned to get rich making movies with the impostor.....somehow.

URBAN LEGENDS: FINAL CUT (2000)

“It Was An Urban Legend That Started It All. Now It Continues On The Alpine University Campus....”

Directed by John Ottman; Written by Paul Harris Boardman & Scott Derrickson; Produced by Neal H Moritz, Gina Matthews and Richard Luke Rothschild.

MEDDLING KIDS

Amy (Jennifer Morrison) is The Damsel In Distress

Travis (Matthew Davis) is The Hunky-But-Sinister Guy

Trevor (Matthew Davis) is The Twin Brother

Stan (Anthony Anderson) is The Funny Black Guy

Dirk (Michael Bacall) is The Nerd

Graham (Joseph Lawrence) is The Rich Kid

Sandra (Jessica Cauffiel) is The Bimbo

Vanessa (Eva Mendes) is The Bulldyke

UNHELPFUL ADULTS

Reese (Loretta Devine) The Security Guard

VILLAIN

Professor Solomon (Hart Bochner)

Attention budding screenwriters: if a script as hackneyed as *Urban Legends: Final Cut* can get produced, there's no reason to give up yet. Pick a cliché, and no matter how desperate or hoary it seems, there's a good chance you'll see it wheeze into life during the film's ninety-eight groaning minutes. The it-was-a-movie-all-along opening? Check. The identical twin brother? Check. The and-then-I-woke-up scene, the your-boyfriend-might-be-the-killer scene and the revelation of the troubled heroine's painful past? Check, check, check.

Also present are some Keystone Kops, who don't believe there's a killer at large even after bodies turn up, a Talking Villain, plus a pair of African-Americans used for the purposes of comic relief - just in case you were expecting sophistication from this non-sequel. If television is ruled by executives who decide what minimum-wage chumps want to watch, there's no reason to believe the movies should be any different or that they're considered anything more than pabulum by the no-name cast and crew, who view their participation as a means to an end. Among those bound for bigger (better?) things here are co-writer Scott Derrickson, who went onto direct a remake of *The Day The Earth Stood Still* (2008), lead Jennifer Morrison, who became a regular on *House*, plus Eva Mendes and Anthony Anderson, who didn't do too badly either. In fact, the only person likely to regret the experience is director John Ottman, who subsequently returned to his day job as a composer and editor and has yet to make a follow-up.

It's not hard to see why. When a knife-wielding psycho despatches a planeload of morons in the opening moments, including two members of the Mile High Club who see "You're Going Down" written on the mirror in blood, it turns out to be a film school project, but then the cast and crew are picked off in ways that are scarcely more imaginative. Before being decapitated by a broken windowpane, a girl wakes up in a bathtub minus a kidney, which is then thrown to a dog; while searching for her keys in a pile of fake intestines (long story), a bad actress becomes the unwilling star in a snuff film that when screened for her colleagues, gets raves for her 'acting'; a crewmember is electrocuted in the 'Tunnel Of Terror', an amusement park set whose mannequins are strangely lifelike. What do the later murders have to do with urban legends, you ask? Nothing, because the filmmakers couldn't come up with anything better than some lame talk about myths.

The culprit turns out to be Professor Hart Bochner, who's killing off his students, one after another, on his own campus, just so he can steal their 'brilliant' film, pass it off as his own and escape the kind of piffle he's been offered since playing *Supergirl's* love interest. He gets the usual explanatory speech, which gives Reese, encoring from part one, time enough

to sneak up on him, there's a scuffle, his gun gets mixed up with some replica firearms yadda yadda yadda. Did we mention the script's sorta hokey?

If at all possible, Reese is even more of a bumbling dumbass this time around, whether she's quoting Pam Grier movies, calling suspects 'Sugar' and 'Baby' or missing a guy being savagely beaten on CCTV because she's performing a dance to the *Foxy Brown* theme song. Though Anthony Anderson keeps threatening to blow her offscreen with his practical jokes and 'urban' humour, she regains her footing and once more buys our heroine some much-needed time come the unmasking scene.

That's our Reese. She may be a caricature, but she's a whole lot of woman.

ZOINKS!

Despite its film school setting, *Final Cut*'s villain wears a fencing mask, which was apparently inspired by/ripped off from *Graduation Day* (1981). If you don't recall this High School-set slasher, it's the one where the killer stalks the school track team, including Vanna White, Linnea Quigley and a character named George Michael. It was directed by a former Rabbi.

DOUBLE ZOINKS!!

Urban Legends: Bloody Mary, the third and (so far) final instalment, went straight to DVD, but it's notable as the film debut of Rooney Mara (*The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*), whose real-life sister Kate plays a smart, resourceful redhead whose friends include a nerd, a dog-loving jock, and a stoner who owns a van with flowers on the side.

YOU CAN IMAGINE A CARTOON CHARACTER SAYING....

Reese: "I want the crazy-ass white girl to drop the gun and kick it away!"

OR

Lisa: "Help! I just woke up in a tub of ice and-"

911 Operator: "Don't tell me. Your kidney's gone."

Lisa: "Yes!"

911 Operator: "Listen, honey. I've got Princess Di on line four. I gotta go."

OR

Reese: "Professor, drop the shovel!"

OR

Reese: "I know a good story. It's about a campus serial killer who murders eight people."

Amy: "Yeah, I heard that one. It supposedly happened at Pendleton. It's just an urban legend."

OR

Reese: "That's my sister, baby, and she's a whole lot of woman."

OR

Dirk: "Fuck George Lucas."

Stan: "You're going to hell, man!"

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

The most common urban legend in the Scoobiverse, as any fool will tell you, is the 'Five College Theory' – the notion that Mystery Incorporated's members represent the five Boston colleges.

Girls-only Smith's College, for instance, with its heavy emphasis on SAT scores, is supposedly represented by Velma, whereas Daphne's would-be alma mater, Mt Holyoke, shifts the emphasis onto personality and extracurricular activities. Fred's muscular (it says here) hero/leader embodies the spirit of Amherst College, while his more laid-back buddy would

be perfectly at home at Hampshire aka *Hempshire* College.

And Scooby himself? He's clearly an ambassador for Umass Amherst, which like Hampshire is perceived as a playground for goofy, hedonistic stoners. This is denied by the show's creators, of course, and it's not hard to see why. We thought it was bullshit, too.

VALENTINE (2001)

“Remember That Kid Everyone Ignored On Valentine’s Day? He Remembers you!”

Directed by Jamie (*Urban Legend*) Blanks; Written by Donna & Wayne Powers and Gretchen J Berg & Aaron Harberts, based on a novel by Tom Savage; Produced by Dylan Sellers and Bruce Berman.

DAMSELS IN DISTRESS

Paige (Denise Richards) is The Slut

Kate (Marley Shelton) is The Troubled Heroine

Dorothy (Jessica Capshaw) is The Rich Girl

Lily (Jessica Cauffiel) is The Bimbo

Shelley (Katherine Heigl) is The Doomed Best Friend

Ruthie (Hedy Burress) is The Ex

UNHELPFUL ADULTS

Vaughn (Fulvio Cecere) The Detective

Kim (Benita Ha) The Stepmom

VILLAIN

Adam (David Boreanz)

We’ve all stayed awake wondering what slasher movie Denise Richards would eventually appear in, and since it was understood that she wouldn’t be portraying a chaste maiden, the expectation was for a down-and-dirty sleazefest, *The Slumber Party Massacre* meets *Wild Things*, where an all-girl volleyball team’s bikini car wash was interrupted by a chainsaw-wielding crazy in a hockey mask.

Valentine is not that movie.

Valentine is the kind of slickly-produced, instantly forgettable multiplex fluff you might expect a former Bond girl to appear in, though in fairness to Ms Richards it does have a few things going for it. It’s not *Tammy And The T-Rex*. And Charlie Sheen isn’t in it.

Bearing scant resemblance to its source novel, the slasher genre or anything approaching a real thriller, the movie follows the travails of five *Sex And The City* types as they talk about relationships, struggle to meet a man who isn’t a drunk or a panty-sniffer and are stalked by a killer in a cherub mask, whose nose bleeds after every murder. This is the filmmakers’ subtle way of informing the viewer that the culprit is the gawky nerd the girls taunted at the Valentine’s Day dance thirteen years earlier, which was such an emotionally scaring experience for poor Jeremy Melton that he underwent a complete breakdown, become a delusional psychotic and signed on to appear in this film. Given that “JM”, as he signs himself on threatening letters, decapitates an innocent cop, chases Richards with a portable drill and kills another victim with a bow and arrow, though, we’re fairly certain the punishment doesn’t fit the crime.

The movie gets off to a bad start when Shelley, who’s studying to be a doctor, blows off her dinner date from hell in favour of cutting up a corpse at midnight in an empty, dimly-lit morgue while wearing her dinner clothes and make-up. Which seemed a tad unrealistic to us, but *we’re* not doctors. Having left her cadaver to investigate a strange noise (uh-oh), she returns to discover it has started breathing (double uh-oh), and picture her surprise when it vanishes behind her back before re-emerging with a cherub mask and a bad attitude. After being chased down a dark corridor with lots of doors (without, sadly, entering through one door and exiting from another) Shelley reasons that if you can’t beat ‘em, you can disguise yourself as a corpse, a ruse that doesn’t fool our little cherub for a second. He’s crazy, not stupid.

Come to think of it, he might actually be the smartest member of the cast. When Lily is chased through a Modern Art exhibition by the killer, who by the way is also an expert archer, he sends a bow straight to his victim’s heart that hurls her over a railing into a conveniently placed dumpster, and nobody so much as mentions the damage, the disappearance or the dead girl reeking up the place. When the cops ask to speak to her, they’re told “She’s out of town” or “She’s in LA”,

and nobody tries her cell. Bear in mind, folks, this is *after* she's received maggot-infested chocolates and a note signed "JM".

Valentine might be handsomely mounted, with a larger budget and better actors than an 80s slasher, but it wouldn't last a single weekend if it played rural Drive-ins. Those who frequented the passion pits of old weren't exactly averse to knucklehead characters and narrative stupidity, but no way would they sit through all that talk just to get to Richards' gratuitous Jacuzzi scene. That kind of jibber-jabber would've been mostly inaudible once patrons began signalling their disapproval by leaning on their horns.

Even if you do watch the entire film, all you get for your effort is one of the lamest wrap-ups this side of *Basic Instinct*, with the killer's identity revealed in the last shot. Once the supporting cast are dead, Kate and Adam are reunited in a touching scene that turns sinister when Adam's nose begins to bleed.....making us wonder about the software the cops used to age Jeremy Melton's photo, which looked nothing like him. In fact, given that Adam's an off-the-wagon alcoholic, could he even hold a knife, or would he stumble around like *Scary Movie*'s villain? Think about that. Never see them in the same room, do you?

ZOINKS!

David Boreanaz's Angel character was part of the 'Scooby Gang' in *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*.

YOU CAN IMAGINE A CARTOON CHARACTER SAYING....

Ruthie (upon seeing the killer): "I....I was just...erm..."

OR

Kate: (about Adam): "He's no angel, but he's not a killer."

OR

Max: "What's the problem?"

Lily: "The problem is that you turned out to be a cheap, hypocritical sleazeball!"

Max: "Yeah, but you knew that. So....does that mean you're not gonna be my Valentine."

OR

Paige: "Detective Vaughn, please remove your hand from my thigh."

Vaughn: "Okay, where would you like me to put it?"

Paige: "How about up your ass?"

OR

Shelley: (reading her Valentine): "The journey of love is an arduous trek, my love grows for you as you bleed from your neck."

OR

Dorothy: (reading her Valentine): "Roses are red, violets are blue, they'll need dental records to identify you!"

OR

Kate: "He's not a drunk. He's a borderline addictive personality who happens to like alcohol a lot."

OR

Paige: "You brought me upstairs to show me your penis! That's so sweet!"

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

When the gang investigate a series of disappearances in *A Scooby Doo Valentine*, they realize it's the work of their evil clones, a group of Hollywood extras led by N'Sync's JC Chasez. An appalled Daphne quips: "Was Sarah Michelle Gellar not

available?"

MY BLOODY VALENTINE (2009)

“Are You Ready For Your Heart To Be Broken? He’s Going To Do It!”

Directed by Patrick Lussier; Written by Todd Farmer and Zane Smith, based on a screenplay by John Beaird; Produced by Jack L Murray.

MEDDLING KIDS

Sarah (Jaime King) is The Damsel In Distress

Irene (Betsy Rue) is The Slut

Megan (Megan Boone) is The Bimbo

UNHELPFUL ADULTS

Palmer (Kerr Smith) The New Sheriff

Martin (Edi Gathegi) The Deputy

Burke (Tom Atkins) The Old Sheriff

VILLAIN

Tom (Jensen Ackles)

Remember Miner Forty-Niner, the villain whose costume consisted of stilts, a black waistcoat, a brown hat and a huge fake beard that gave him an uncomfortable resemblance to Grizzly Adams? In the episode *Mine Your Own Business*, a Gold City resident named Hank used the disguise to scare off employees of the town’s businesses, which next to telling whoppers about Weapons Of Mass Destruction is surely the most effective way of stealing oil land. He was revamped as “Miner 49er” for *Scooby Doo 2: Monsters Unleashed*, which transformed him into a fire-breathing Yosemite Sam-type before he went the way of all corny villains and ended up as an exhibit at the Crystal Cove Spook Museum.

Scratch the hat and beard, add a gasmask and pickaxe and – presto! – the miner becomes Harry Warden, the killer in 1981’s *My Bloody Valentine*, who instead of attempting to scare the townsfolk by wailing in the dead of night cuts out hearts and sends them to his victims in chocolate boxes, usually with a note that reads, “Roses are red, violets are blue, one is dead and so are you!” Harry gets his own revamp with *My Bloody Valentine 3D*, a *Fangoria*-approved gorefest where eyeballs pop out, heads are split in two and, because we’re talking 3D, pickaxes are thrown at the viewer. He’s in a coma following a ‘mining accident’ where he murdered 22 of his colleagues, so when he wakes up his first thought is to tear out a nurse’s heart before returning to the now-abandoned mines, where a group of teenagers are holding their Valentine’s Day bash. He must’ve stopped off at a fancy dress store en route, because ol’ Harry turns up in full mining gear, complete with a pickaxe that, in his hands, becomes a ninja throwing star, capable of taking out an opponent hundreds of yards away. Having decimated the town’s teenaged population by roughly a third, his activities are curtailed by Sheriff Burke, but of course there’s a convenient cave-in, they never find a body etc, so a decade later another crazed miner shows up – or is it the same guy?

When a movie called *My Bloody Valentine*, starring a hot young actor from TV’s *Supernatural*, can’t be released in time for Valentine’s Day because the release date of Friday, February 13th, 2009, has already been snapped up by the producers of a movie called *Friday The 13th*, starring a hot young actor from TV’s *Supernatural*, something is terribly wrong with popular culture. Both films were revamped knock-offs that featured invulnerable masked psychos and took place in a town with a dark past where the local law enforcement is somewhat ineffectual, people surprise each other or say “who is it?” while investigating a strange noise and the big-titted blondes get naked a lot. The only difference we found was that *Valentine* offers a shot of actor/co-writer Todd Farmer’s naked derriere – in 3D.

If you’ve never seen *Supernatural*, it’s about two brothers who drive across America solving mysteries that involve antagonists with names like The Hook Man or Bloody Mary and take place in Hell House or The Abandoned Sanitarium Where Kids Sneak In After Dark. In other words, it’s every cheesy horror movie you’ve ever seen, and the titles of some episodes – *Children Shouldn’t Play With Dead Things*, *I Know What You Did Last Summer* and, er, *My Bloody Valentine* – really *are* cheesy horror movies. Spending an evening with the box set is like attending an all-night horrorthon that only shows gutless wonders, but it’s preferable to series creator Eric Kripke’s *Boogeyman* (2005), the best grown-man-who’s-

scared-of-closets movie ever.

Critics have commented on how faithful *Valentine* '09 is to the original, and while it's not our recollection that the 1981 film had as many ripped-out hearts or an actress as willing to disrobe as Betsy Rue (who had a similar role in Rob Zombie's *Halloween II*, as well as a line about her pussy turning into a pumpkin – we'd sure pay to see *that* in 3D), we'll gladly concede they have a point.....until the end. Switching the killer's identity from Palmer to Tom causes problems, not least when ol' Tom comes face to face with the miner, so the filmmakers go the *Haute Tension* route and say it was all in his mind which, frankly, is a cheat.

That's another bad habit learned from Hanna-Barbera – the plot that doesn't stand up to intense scrutiny. Or casual scrutiny. Or, come to think of it, any kind of scrutiny. But at least he wasn't trying to steal oil land.

ZOINKS!

Jaime King was also in the remakes of *Mother's Day* and *Silent Night*, the latter of which co-starred Malcolm McDowell. McDowell appeared in Rob Zombie's *Halloween* reboot with Udo Kier, who voiced Professor Pericles on *Scooby Doo Mystery Incorporated*.

YOU CAN IMAGINE A CARTOON CHARACTER SAYING...

Megan: "I'm kinda pussy sometimes."

Sarah: "Welcome to the club!"

OR:

Burke: (to a corpse): "Happy fucking Valentine's Day!"

OR:

Burke: (discovering a torn-out heart): "Who did this?"

Officer: "Harry Warden."

Burke: "Harry Warden's in a coma."

Officer: "Guess he woke up."

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

According to *Scooby Doo 2: Monsters Unleashed*, the best way to combat Miner 49er is to gorge yourself on chilies and set light to your flatulence. This will cause him to turn to dust.

SORORITY ROW (2009)

“Sisters For Life....Or Death!”

Directed by Stewart Hendler ; Written by Josh Strolberg & Pete Goldfinger, based on a screenplay by Mark Rosman;
Produced by Darrin Holender & Mike Karz.

DAMSELS IN DISTRESS

Cassidy (Briana Evigan) is The Brunette

Chugs (Margo Harshman) is The Blonde

Ellie (Rumer Willis) is The Redhead

Jessica (Leah Pipes) is The Bitch

Claire (Jamie Chung) is The Token Ethnic Chick

OTHER MEDDLING KIDS

Kyle (Matt Lanter) is The Hunky Guy

Megan (Audrina Partridge) is The Doomed Best Friend

Garret (Matt O’Leary) is The Jock

UNHELPFUL ADULTS

Mrs Crenshaw (Carrie Fisher) The Housekeeper

Senator Tyson (Rick Applegate) The Career-Driven Politician Father

VILLAIN

Andy (Julian Morris)

Daphne Blake may be Mystery Incorporated’s perennial damsel in distress, with only her accent and hair colour distinguishing her from Penelope Pitstop, but this most imperilled of heroines was actually based on Thalia Menninger, the cash-hungry beauty from *The Many Loves Of Dobie Gillis*. Tuesday Weld, who played Thalia, left after the first season, leaving Dobie to romance a series of interchangeable honeys before settling for Zelda Gilroy (Sheila James Kuehl), a smart, diminutive aficionado of chunky sweaters....need we say more?

According to *A Pup Named Scooby Doo*, which ran on ABC between 1988-91, Daphne was born into money and it’s her cash that bankrolls the gang’s sleuthing. She has a butler named Jenkins to fight monsters on her behalf, a stretch limo with its own roll-out red carpet and, of course, a subway station in her house (“Don’t you?”). She’s also a member of the décor-of-the-month club and freaks out if told she’s wrinkling her dress, so all this stock rich-girl character lacks is a career-driven politician father and a sinister boyfriend with a troubled past.

Sorta-kind-a-but-not-really based on Mark Rosman’s *The House On Sorority Row* (1982), this economically-titled revamp gives us not one, not two, but *five* stock rich-bitch characters, although it’s hard to say who was the bigger inspiration — Daphne or The Spice Girls. As in that quintet of Bimbos From Hell, there’s a Blonde, a Brunette, a Redhead etc, making *Sorority Row* the *Spiceworld* of slasher movies. Jeepers!

Junking everything from Rosman’s movie except the setting, *Sorority* follows the *I Know What You Did Last Summer* template, which is apt because that movie featured Daphne herself, Sarah Michelle Gellar, in the stuck-up beauty queen role, although here it’s not a road accident but a prank-gone-wrong that leaves someone dead (or are they?), then after disposing of the body, the others are stalked by a hooded killer yadda yadda yadda. If she was in a slasher movie, what would Daphne do? For that matter, what would The Spice Girls do? *Sorority* tells you: they’d sneak up on each other, brag about their “perfect tits” and take a lot of showers.

One area where the film excels is in showing us just how mean, slutty and bitchy the girls can be....before killing them in pleasingly brutal ways. Ringleader Jessica wants to marry wealth so she can dedicate her life to worrying about fashion

and abusing the help, but when her prospective father-in-law receives a Vice-Presidential nomination, he lays down the law: you have to behave in a certain way to get certain things. No more playing Queen Bitch and exploiting your friends, at least not in front of the cameras. Tragically, this soap opera is cut short when Jess crosses the path of the killer, who rams a tire iron down her throat.

Faring little better is Chugs, whose nickname, it's safe to assume, comes from the booze bottle she clutches in nearly every scene. Maybe that's why she's seeing a "psychiatrist", who she discovers handcuffed to his bed after his last session "finished abruptly". Naturally, he asks if she wants to finish what his last patient started. Naturally, she agrees. Then our hooded psycho kills them both, saving the world in the process.

The killer turns out to be Andy, Cassidy's boyfriend, who has a great motive for killing her friends and everybody she knows. He thinks they're assholes. *Sorority Row* might be overstuffed with tiresome, unsympathetic bitches, but you can't say it doesn't have a hero.

ZOINKS!

Matt Lanter voices teen idol "Baylor Hotner" on *Scooby Doo Mystery Incorporated*.

YOU CAN IMAGINE A CARTOON CHARACTER SAYING....

Jessicca: "Please don't let me get killed. Please don't let me get killed...."

OR

Jessica: "Ellie, no one is dead. Well....Megan."

OR

Ellie: "Megan's alive, you guys!"

Jessica: "Ellie, you're being borderline retarded right now...."

OR

Mrs Crenshaw: "Don't think I'm afraid of you. I run a house with fifty crazy bitches!"

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

Speaking of early 80s slashers, we've always wanted a remake of *The Prowler* (1981), mostly because it was scripted by Neal (son of Joseph) Barbera and Glenn Leopold, who between them worked on *The New Scooby Doo Mysteries*, *Scooby's All-Star Laff-A-Lympics* and *The 13 Ghosts of Scooby Doo*.

If you haven't seen it or don't remember, this is the one about the jilted WWII soldier who murders his former sweetheart at the Class of '45 Grand Ball and returns, for no particular reason, to pick up where he left off thirty-five years later. Needless to say, there's a whiff of the day job as characters split up, search the local cemetery after dark and are chased down corridors by a masked assailant, though we don't recall too many Scooby villains having their heads vaporized by a shotgun-wielding heroine. Also, if you can't deduce that the Sheriff is the killer before the end of the fourth reel, you should turn the Mystery Machine around and go home.

In true cartoon fashion, the Sheriff can teleport himself in and out of a scene, is observed only by those he chases and proves a dab hand at breaking down doors, although he seems to lose his powers around meddling kids. In fact, the film has such disdain for adults that its Final Girl ought to wear badges that proclaim "Question Authority" and "Never Trust Anyone Over Thirty". Not only is the villain the usual outwardly respectable authority figure, but those not of college age possess a chilly demeanour, an intense dislike of "damn fool kids" and a penchant for voyeurism. Teenagers know best....even if they do enjoy a midnight swim outside the dance hall where a prowler has been reported.

MY SOUL TO TAKE (2010)

“Only One Has The Power To Save Their Souls!”

Written & Directed by Wes Craven; Produced by Craven, Anthony Katagas and Iya Labunka.

MEDDLING KIDS

Bug (Max Thieriot) is The Troubled Hero

Brandon (Nick Lashaway) is The Jock

Laia (Emily Meade) is The Brunette

Brittany (Paulina Olszynski) is The Blonde

Penelope (Zena Grey) is The Jesus Freak

Jerome (Denzel Whitaker) is The Black Guy

Jay (Jeremy Chu) is The Asian Guy

UNHELPFUL ADULTS

Patterson (Frank Grillo) The Detective

May (Jessica Hecht) The Mom With A Secret

VILLAIN

Alex (John Magaro)

Proving the adage that artists begin at thirty, peak at fifty and are dribbling into their oatmeal at seventy, Wes Craven directed *The Last House On The Left* at thirty-one, *Scream* at fifty-six and *My Soul To Take*....at seventy. He must’ve experienced a ‘senior moment’ and forgot he was the director of *Scream* because *Soul* is as bad as one of its clones, a joyless and pedestrian slasher where teens say “I’ll be right back” without irony, sneak up on each other, wander down dark corridors etc. He probably forgot about *A Nightmare On Elm Street* and *Shocker* too because here’s another movie where the killer has supernatural powers, the family has a dark secret, the hero has a connection to the killer....

At least the opening scene has a few unintentional laughs. Moments after a TV reporter has informed us that The Riverton River, a serial killer who uses a knife with ‘Vengeance’ written on the blade, is still at large, Abel Plankov discovers just such a knife in his cellar, causing him to talk to himself in Jigsaw’s voice before blacking out. He wakes up next to his wife, who’s lying in a pool of her own blood, which is when his psychiatrist phones to ask, “Is everything all right?”

Wait, it gets funnier. Abel goes Jack Torrance, blowing away cops and attempting to kill his own daughter before being shot, which only makes him angrier. Stealing a cop’s firearm, he snarls, “This is for you, you cunt!” Another cop shoots him and says, “That’s for shut the fuck up!”

Got that? Now press *stop* and *eject* and throw away the DVD, because you’ve had all the fun this movie has to offer.

For those who remain, the narrative then jumps forward sixteen years and introduces seven teenagers born the night of Abel’s rampage, who spend their birthday every year honouring this great citizen by gathering at the river and waiting for his ghost to appear. It’s a sign of how by-the-numbers *Soul* is that, moments after the Ripper’s tale has been told around the campfire, a prankster in a costume jumps out to scare everyone. This old wheeze also appeared in *Scooby Doo Camp Scare*, released the same year.

One by one, they’re knocked off by a killer in a Ripper costume who may (or may not) be Bug, a teen so troubled that even he doesn’t know if he’s ever been in a sanitarium. He also doesn’t know who his father is, but if you’ve seen *Shocker*, you already know the answer to that one. If you enjoy movies where you’re several steps ahead of the characters, this one’s for you.

ZOINKS!

This was the first movie Craven had directed from his own script since 1994's *New Nightmare*. When it grossed only \$20m *worldwide*, he decided to return to the *Scream* franchise.

YOU CAN IMAGINE A CARTOON CHARACTER SAYING....

Penelope: "If things get too hot, just turn on the prayer conditioning."

OR

Alex: "It's not okay for everybody to be killing each other all the time!"

OR

Penelope: "We're all doomed, Bug. It's the human condition."

OR

Alex: "You were in your dead mom forever. Oxygen deprivation. It can make you crazy."

OR

Penelope: "What men will do to you in prison is nothing compared to what demons will do to you in hell, on beds of fire, for all eternity."

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

See: *Scooby Doo And The Curse of The Witch's Ghost*.

Every year in the New England town of Oakhaven, people gather to see the ghost of Sarah Ravencroft, a Seventeenth Century witch who can fly and shoot fireballs. Naturally, she turns out to a hoax perpetrated by the townsfolk, who were hoping to attract tourists....

SCREAM 4 (2011)

“New Decade. New Rules.”

Directed by Wes Craven; Written by Kevin Williamson; Produced by Craven, Williamson and Iya Labunka.

MEDDLING KIDS

Sidney (Neve Campbell) is The Damsel In Distress (Again)

Kirby (Hayden Panettiere) is The Blonde

Robbie (Eric Knudsen) is The Nerd

Trevor (Nico Totorella) is The Hunky-But-Sinister Guy

UNHELPFUL ADULTS

Gail (Courtney Cox) The Reporter (Again)

Dewey (David Arquette) The Sheriff (don't be fooled, he's still a dumbass - again)

Hicks (Marley Shelton) The Deputy

Perkins (Anthony Anderson) Token Black Guy

Rebecca (Alison Brie) The Heartless Publicist

VILLAINS

Jill (Emma Roberts)

Charlie (Rory Culkin)

Don't know about you, but if we were the law in Woodsboro, owning a Ghostface mask and making what's-your-favourite-scary-movie-type phone calls would be an offence similar to holocaust denial or watching Michael Bay movies. Instead, when a killer stalks a bunch of cine-literate teens (again), taunting them with horror movie trivia (again), Dewey Riley, who inexplicably received a promotion, proves such an incompetent goofball (again) that the real detecting has to be done by Daphne, er, Gail and Sidney.

Again.

It's been over a decade since they last returned to the well, and *Scream 4* (or *Scre4m*, whatever) proves that Dimension Films spent that time....counting their money. They must've come up a million or two short because they've bought back Wes Craven and Kevin Williamson as hired guns and given them instructions to rattle a tin in our faces while asking us to please give generously. To his immense credit, Williamson comes up with a funny line to excuse the shameful thing he's been asked to do: “You do a sequel to outdo the original.” We're still chortling over that one.

Sequel #3 brings to mind what Bill Hicks said about The David Letterman Show – it thinks it's edgy and hip, but it's just as mainstream and commercial as its competitors. We get a taste of how hip the movie thinks it is during the pre-title sequence, where Williamson tries to freshen things up by pulling the movie-within-a-movie trick not once, but twice, but that turns out to be a clever-clever false scare to distract us from the fact we're not really seeing anything new. If the movie really wanted to do something unique, it'd ditch the *Dawson's Creek*-alikes in favour of a black character who isn't the comic relief, doesn't get killed in ten seconds and – check this out – *he's the lead*. Instead, we get Anthony Anderson....and enough said.

For all the nudge-wink self-awareness, the suspense and surprises are few, the killer's identity is predictable and all the disposable characters wear Red Shirts. When Sidney fires her publicist, you've a fair idea of the fate that awaits her even before she wanders off into the dark parking lot, realizes her car won't start etc. Then her cell phone rings and....well, you know the drill.

ZOINKS!

Hayden Panettiere voiced Fairy Princess Willow in *Scooby Doo And The Goblin King*. No, we're not starting to repeat

ourselves, Gentle Reader. This is the sequel to a comment we made earlier.

YOU CAN IMAGINE A CARTOON CHARACTER SAYING....

Rachel: (after watching a *Stab* movie)“That was so fucking stupid. Pure horseshit. The death of horror right here in front of us....”

OR

Jill: (to Sidney): “You just won’t die, will you? Who are you, Michael Fucking Myers?

OR

Rachel: “A fuckin’ Facebook killer....you’re kiddin’ me, right?”

Chloe: “I guess now it would be Twitter.”

OR

Sidney: “You forgot the first rule of remakes, Jill. Don’t fuck with the original!”

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

Nothing. He doesn’t own a cell phone.

PART II

HAUNTED HOUSES

THE HAUNTING (1999)

“Some Houses Are Born Bad.”

Directed by Jan de Bont; Written by David Self, based on *The Haunting Of Hill House* by Shirley Jackson; Produced by Colin Wilson and Susan Arnold.

MEDDLING KIDS

Eleanor (Lili Taylor) is The Damsel In Distress

Theo (Catherine Zeta-Jones) is The Bulldyke

Luke (Owen Wilson) is The Beatnik

UNHELPFUL ADULTS

Dr Merrow (Liam Neeson) The Sinister Scientist

Mr Dudley (Bruce Dern) The Creepy Caretaker

Mrs Dudley (Marion Seldes) The Creepy Housekeeper

Carrie (Virginia Madsen) The Bitchy Sister

VILLAINS

Lots of CGI ghosts. And Jan de Bont.

This is the tawdry, illogical, monotonous, never-ending, pointless, lame, ridiculous, underwhelming, needless, stupid, patience-testing, senseless, unnecessary, time-stealing, joyless, obnoxious, oh-God-oh-God-I’m-going-to-die-in-here Jan de Bont movie that isn’t *Speed 2: Cruise Control*, so imagine our glee when it was trounced at the box office by a \$60,000 home movie from two filmmakers nobody had heard of. *The Haunting* was an \$80m summer movie from Steven Spielberg’s Dreamworks that had Big Stars, a Big Concept and some of the most (over)elaborate production design ever, but it was up against *The Blair Witch Project*, which even though it opened at #15, was fuelled by positive word of mouth (and saturation advertising) that sent it Top Ten, where it stayed all summer long. It never made #1, but with a worldwide gross of \$258m, that hardly seemed important. *Haunting*, in contrast, opened at #1 with a \$48,709,706 gross, saw its takings drop by fifty-four percent in week two and had left the Top Ten after only three weeks, resulting in a paltry domestic haul of \$91m.

While *Blair Witch* had favourable reviews up the yin-yang, *Haunting*’s notices used words like “overblown”, “boring” and “ludicrous”, with most critics wondering what Shirley Jackson’s novel (or Robert Wise’s 1963 adaptation) had done to deserve such treatment. The *Austin Chronicle* called it “about as tantalizing as a desicated Gummi Bear”, while James Berardinelli, writing for *Reel Views*, noted that “the only thing disturbing about *The Haunting* is how discouraging the end product is.” Even *Christian Spotlight On The Movies*, which gave the film a “Very Offensive” Moral Rating, was less offended by the profanity and sexual innuendos (including a “token gratuitously bisexual character”) than the fact that “it fails to entertain.” One of their readers, however, showed us a new interpretation of the picture.

In pointing out the film’s “obvious Christian symbolic meaning”, the reader claimed that Hill House represents “the once beautiful but perverted and evil world”, ghostly villain Hugh Crain is Satan and the Velma Dinkley-ish Eleanor, played by Lili Taylor, is none other than Jesus Christ. The remaining characters – The Doctor With An Ulterior Motive, The Bisexual Character, The Beatnik – are lost souls in search of redemption. When Eleanor sacrifices herself to save them and bond Crain in hell, she, like Christ, sacrifices herself for everyone, regardless of their sins.

While we freely admit to having missed that particular reading of the material, we also have to object to it, not on moral or religious grounds, but because it obscures what *The Haunting* really is: a sinister thief using the supernatural to cover up nefarious activity.

Like a cartoon villain, de Bont gives you some hoohah about ghosts as a distraction while he invades your life, steals your time and – why the hell not? – pisses in your gas tank. Greed is the only explanation for taking a novel that has resonance beyond its words and turning it into an overpriced would-be Blockbuster with zero resonance, the kind of film where the short girl follows footprints that lead to a clue, the tall girl finds a room with a revolving floor, the beatnik provides the

comedy, etc. There's a white sheet ghost, trap doors, a mysterious knocking noise and an old diary that helps solve the mystery, but before things get *too* cartoonish, the characters attempt to explain events 'logically.' Turns out creepy Dr. Neeson lured them to a haunted house not for an "insomnia study" but for a study of group fear and hysteria (what're the odds?), so as staircases collapse and statues come to life, they reason that the doc must be behind it all. Probably with projections and remote-controlled robots. No other explanation is possible.

Kids, if you're going to rip people off with a dumb haunted house movie, give Shirley Jackson a miss. Since Amityville is an actual place, the name is free to use, and if someone can make a movie called *Amityville Dollhouse*, you can bet your efforts will be greeted with zero expectations by an audience of rhesus monkeys. This allows you total creative freedom. As long as your movie's set in a spooky building (with characters who say "This building sure is spooky!", just so we know), you can make a heart-wrenching drama about a young penguin coming to terms with his sexuality, or there's that guaranteed crowd pleaser, the saga of a nun going bald in a cupboard. Personally, we like the penguin idea, but don't let us influence you.

ZOINKS!

Bruce Dern was in *The Incredible 2-Headed Transplant* with Casey Kasem, the original voice of Shaggy. Also, Virginia Madsen provided Cleopatra's voice for *Scooby Doo in Where's My Mummy?*

YOU CAN IMAGINE A CARTOON CHARACTER SAYING....

Mrs Dudley: "I don't stay after dinner, not after it begins to get dark. I leave before dark comes. We live in town – nine miles – so there won't be anyone around if you need help.

Eleanor: "Why would we?"

Mrs Dudley: "We couldn't even hear you in the night. No one could. No one lives any nearer than town. No one will come any nearer than that. In the night, in the dark....

OR:

Eleanor: "The blood led me to them."

Theo: "The blood?"

Eleanor: "The footprints in blood!"

Theo: "Now I'm worried about you."

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

When the gang investigate a haunted mansion in *Haunted House Hang-Up*, a mysterious knocking noise leads them to an empty room where they split up to follow different sets of footprints. The trail leads Shaggy and Scooby straight to The Headless Spector who, accompanied by the pop song *Love The World* (performed by Austin Roberts...whoever he is), chases them until they find a clue that helps solve the mystery. It turns out to be the disguise of one Perrod Stillwall, who wasn't trying to cover up illegal activity, just scare away burglars.

THIR13EN GHOSTS (2001)

“Terror Has Multiplied!”

Directed by Steve Beck; Written by Neal Marshall Stevens and Richard D’Ovidio, based on a screenplay by Robb White; Produced by Joel Silver, Robert Zemeckis and Gilbert Adler.

MEDDLING KIDS

Kathy (Shannon Elizabeth) is The Damsel In Distress

Maggie (Rah Digga) is The Funny Black Chick

Bobby (Alec Roberts) is The Cute Kid

UNHELPFUL ADULTS

Arthur (Tony Shalhoub) The Dad

Dennis (Matthew Lillard) The Psychic

Ben (J R Bourne) The Slimy Lawyer

VILLAINS

Cyrus (F Murray Abraham)

Kalina (Embeth Davidtz)

And,er, twelve ghosts

If you specialize in remakes, you can’t really call yourself an artist – you’re a scientist. You don’t create, you formulate. Or in Michael Bay’s case, summon from the blackest pits of hell.

In the same year Bay co-founded Platinum Dunes, Dark Castle unleashed their second redux (following 1999’s *House On Haunted Hill*) and they could’ve chosen better because *13 Ghosts* (as it was called in those days) wasn’t even that great when William Castle did it in 1960. Those who remember it at all remember it for the gimmick of “Illusion-O”, where “Ghost Viewers” (actually 3D glasses) allowed audience members to see the spirits. *Thir13en Ghosts* (as it’s now known) keeps the glasses and jettisons pretty much everything else in favour of noise and special effects, though it’s hard to say if the filmmakers arrived at a remake of Castle’s film or a retread of *The 13 Ghosts of Scooby Doo*.

In the animated series, as you’ll recall, the opening of the Chest of Demons caused an unlucky number of spirits to escape before Scooby, Shaggy and Daphne attempted to recapture them with the assistance of a cute kid named Flim Flam and Vincent Van Ghoul, a warlock voiced by Vincent Price. Here, twelve ghosts held in twelve cages in the basement of an isolated mansion are unwittingly released, causing The Damsel In Distress, The Cute Kid and The Comic Relief to run around screaming for the rest of the movie. And before you ask, yes, they do decide to split up inside the haunted house. It’s that lame.

In place of the warlock, there’s Matthew ‘Shaggy’ Lillard, who even though he’s psychic doesn’t realize that F Murray Abraham faked his own death in the opening scenes or that Embeth Davidtz’s ghostbuster isn’t all that she seems. Small world dept: Lillard later voiced Shaggy in the *Scooby Doo Mystery Incorporated* TV series, where one of the recurring characters was....Vincent Van Ghoul. He’s also done Shakespeare.

Ah, but what of the thirteenth ghost, you say? Glad you asked. Turns out Abraham lured Tony Shalhoub to the house under false pretences, stashed the ghost of his dead wife in a closet and hoped her appearance would make Shalhoub kill himself out of love, thus completing the baker’s dozen and making Abraham the most powerful person in the world....somehow.

ZOINKS!

Co-writer “Neal Marshall Stevens” (aka Benjamin Carr) also wrote *Zarkorr! The Invader*, *Curse Of The Puppet Master*, *Retro Puppet Master* and *Hellraiser: Deader*.

YOU CAN IMAGINE A CARTOON CHARACTER SAYING....

Maggie: "Can I rely on you not to get me killed?"

Dennis: "I guarantee nothing."

OR:

Maggie: "Stuck in here, bunch of crazy white people..."

OR:

Kalina: "We have ten minutes before the ectoplasmic shit hits the fan."

OR:

Maggie: "This is it for me. I am on the first fuckin' plane back to Newark. Uh-uh. I am sick of this nanny shit. I've had it. This was not in the job description. *I quit!*"

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

Thir13en Ghosts might be big, but under no circumstances or any name could it be considered clever. While its animated namesake gave us spirits named Maldor The Malevolent, Demondo, Queen Morbida and Zomba, the screenwriters named their ghosts The Hammer, The Juggernaut, The Dire Mother, The Jackal etc. Seriously, guys, were you even trying?

GHOST SHIP (2002)

“Sea Evil!”

Directed by Steve Beck; Written by Mark Hanlon and John Pogue; Produced by Joel Silver, Robert Zemeckis and Gilbert Adler.

MEDDLING KIDS

Mara (Julianna Margulies) The Damsel In Distress

Dodge (Ron Eldard) The Jock

Greer (Isaiah Washington) The Token Black Guy

Munder (Karl Urban) The Wiseass

UNHELPFUL ADULTS

Murphy (Gabriel Byrne) The Skipper

Santos (Alex Dimitriades) The Engineer

VILLAIN

Jack Ferriman (Desmond Harrington)

Proving that originality is king in Hollywood, Dark Castle followed up *13 Ghosts* (or *Thir13en Ghosts*, whatever) with a haunted ship movie, and a familiar one at that. Released the same year as haunted submarine movie *Below*, and borrowing bits from *Deep Rising*, *Event Horizon*, *The Thing*, *The Shining*, *Alien* etc, *Ghost Ship* also confines its supernatural shenanigans to a single locale but leaves out the claustrophobia and sense of mounting dread. Like their last effort, it's a lot of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

The eponymous vessel is the *Antonia Grazia*, an Italian luxury liner bound for America in 1962, and in an opening setpiece that must've caused even the feral children that haunt multiplexes to look up from their phones, the ship's entire guest list is decimated when a high-tension cable sweeps across the deck, slicing in half everything in its path. This all turns out to be part of an elaborate plot to steal the cargo of gold bullion, but a series of double crosses means the last person left alive is the onboard singer, who apparently orchestrated the heist with Jack Ferriman, a Mysterious Stranger Who Isn't All That He Appears. In fact, he's The Ferryman from Greek mythology (Ferriman = Ferryman, get it?), a collector of souls with quotas to fill and a boatload of bodies to escort to the land of death....or something.

Anyway, Jack attempts to use the liner and its cargo to lure another bunch of greedy fools to their doom four decades later, and once again he lucks out. When he alerts a loud and obnoxious salvage crew to the *Grazia's* miraculous reappearance in international waters, they naturally decide to claim it as their own, but even though these salty sea dogs keep reminding each other “You're the best spot-welder/first mate/deep sea diver in the business”, nobody's familiar with the name *Mary Celeste*. This allows skipper Gabriel Byrne to spin the yarn (and establish the mood) moments before they locate the vessel, but once they're aboard the spooky ship, everyone remembers what kind of movie they're in and starts behaving like a complete idiot.

While we may expect the two comic relief characters to split from the group, wander off to find food and use the setting as an opportunity to scare the heroine by dressing up as ghosts, it's still probably not, you know, Standard Operating Procedure for The World's Greatest Salvage Team. Then again, what's SOP when your engineer dies (foreign accent = dead meat), your boat blows up and you find yourself trapped on the Ship Of Death with a beautiful naked ghost? “Can't cheat on your fiancé with a dead girl, right?” Token Black Guy tells himself, removing his Red Shirt. He follows her as she heads towards open elevator doors and, well, let's just say she gets the gold while he gets the shaft.

Released with the Hanna-Barbera-ish tagline “Sea Evil”, this was Dark Castle's idea of ‘original’ material following two remakes, but instead gave a glimpse of the shipwrecks that lay in the company's future. Their subsequent fright films included *The Reaping* (2007) with two-time Oscar-winner Hilary Swank, *Orphan* (2009) with Oscar nominee Vera Farmiga and *House Of Wax* (2005) with....Paris Hilton.

ZOINKS!

Ghost Ship was Steve Beck's second and final feature before he returned to directing commercials.

YOU CAN IMAGINE A CARTOON CHARACTER SAYING...

Mara: "Oh, God, you really are a fucking ghost!"

OR:

Dodge: "I shot Ferriman. He's dead.

Mara: "Yeah? Don't be so sure."

OR:

Munder: "I think I just shit my pants!"

Dodge: "No, you always smell that way."

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

See: *Go Away, Ghost Ship!*

Here's how you raid a ship: by dressing up as The Ghost Of Redbeard and stealing from your own fleet as part of an insurance scam. That way, when a group of meddling kids and their damn dog investigate, you can say it's payback for when your ancestors brought the pirate to justice three hundred years earlier.

GRAVE ENCOUNTERS 2 (2012)

“Fear Is Just A Word. Reality Is Much Worse!”

Directed by John Poliquin; Written by The Vicious Brothers ; Produced by Shawn Angelski and Martin Fisher.

MEDDLING KIDS

Alex (Richard Harmon) is The Hero/Leader

Jennifer (Leanne Lapp) is The Blonde

Tessa (Stephanie Bennett) is The Brunette

Trevor (Dylan Playfair) is The Joker

Jared (Howie Lai) is The Token Ethnic Guy

UNHELPFUL ADULT

Sean (Sean Rogerson) The Survivor Of The Previous Film

VILLAIN

Collingwood Psychiatric Hospital. (If you check in....the dead will check you out!)

A film crew goes to a haunted asylum. They never return.

Original, huh?

Such was the plot of *Grave Encounters*, so you’d think the folks in *Grave Encounters 2* would know better, especially since this sequel takes place in a world where the first movie exists, the characters have seen it and every armchair critic makes fun of it. But they want to know if the story’s true, so they go to the asylum and – spoiler alert – everybody dies horribly.

Well, everybody except lead dipstick Alex, that is. He’s one of those hairless primates you see on YouTube, the kind of guy who’ll review a movie by waving his arms and raising his voice, except the movie in question is *Grave Encounters* and our boy considers himself to be a (cough) filmmaker. He’s shooting a movie where a bass-voiced killer rips out a cheerleader’s teeth with the zinger “Looks like you’ve got a cavity!”, so he’s more than earned the right to criticize others. Hell, he’s a teen version of Kurosawa, so he can call us any name he wants, any time he chooses.

And we’ll knock his teeth out the back of his neck.

Every ‘found footage’ movie is a variation on the same idea: a small group documents their excursion into the middle of nowhere, they argue, things go bump etc. In each film, you will see:

The camera being jerked around whenever someone shouts “What the hell was that?”

Video Confessionals

Night-vision footage

A victim being dragged offscreen

Off-camera screaming.

Writers The Vicious Brothers and director John Poliquin, a former Production Assistant on *Snakes On A Plane*, know this, so they try to freshen things up by taking a pseudo-hip, post-modern approach. Infra-red footage shows a mysterious shape forming, but it turns out to be a guy breaking wind. Token Ethnic Guy says: “Ethnics always die first!” Then a ghost pulls him through a window, so he should’ve kept his mouth shut.

Once that shtick has been exhausted, though, the movie goes back to ticking off boxes. Creepy kids? Check. The phones don’t work? Check. Do people run around screaming instead of searching for an exit? You betcha. Then they find a body on a gurney, which leads to a hilarious “Is he dead?”/“I think so!”/“Oh, SHIT...” moment.

Don't miss the part where they discover Sean Rogerson (as "himself"), the actor that played Lance in *Grave Encounters*, who it turns out really did disappear while shooting the movie. Looking like a cross between Gollum and the "It's..." man from *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, this twitchy, giggly overactor has been trapped in the building ever since, marking each passing day on the wall. He knows how to transform a closet into a way out (just open and close the door three times) and talks to a flying camera that follows him around. Then he gets sucked through a wall.

This is a weird movie, dudes.

An unnecessary one, too, but we figured out a way to improve it. The only trouble we're having is convincing Scooby to put his name on it.

ZOINKS!

Spoiler: the Vicious Brothers aren't really brothers. Their real names are Colin Minihan & Stuart Ortiz.

YOU CAN IMAGINE AN AUDIENCE SAYING....

Trevor (while watching *Grave Encounters*): "This movie's fucking retarded!"

OR:

Trevor: "*Grave Encounters 2* – can you believe that shit?"

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

Speaking of *insane* asylums, the residents at Crystal Cove's cuckoo's nest make Jack Nicholson and Brad Dourif look sane by comparison. Among the inmates are a giraffe named Mr Bendy, Snappy Jack the turtle and, most dangerous of all, master criminal Professor Pericles – a talking parrot.

PART III

CARTOON VILLAINS

THE FLY II (1989)

“Like Father...Like Son.”

Directed by Chris Walas; Written by Jim & Ken Wheat, Mick Garris and Frank Darabont (right, the *Shawshank Redemption* guy); Produced by Steven Charles Jaffe.

MEDDLING KIDS

Martin (Eric Stoltz) is The Hero/Leader

Beth (Daphne Zuniga) is The Damsel In Distress

UNHELPFUL ADULTS

Stathis (John Getz) The Recluse

Scorby (Gary Chalk) The Security Guard

Dr Shepherd (Frank Turner) The Sinister Scientist

Dr Trimble (William Taylor) The Token Black Scientist

VILLAIN

Anton Bartok (Lee Richardson)

There’s no shortage of bad films directed by Oscar winners, but they mostly don’t open with a woman giving birth to what looks like a 100lb roast turkey. The mother here is supposed to be the Geena Davis character from David Cronenberg’s 1986 film, but as a newly-minted Oscar winner herself, Davis felt she was, you know, above being killed off in a sequel to a remake and turned the role down. Did a little movie called *Thelma & Louise* instead.

Anyway, the turkey becomes Martin Brundle (not, we believe, the racing driver), son of Seth ‘Brundlefly’ Brundle, and a “Chromosomal Malfunction” means he looks nothing like Davis or Jeff Goldblum. It also results in accelerated growth, so by his fifth birthday he’s turned into Eric Stoltz, has a super-genius IQ and, in a perfect example of smart-but-stupid, is trying to perfect his father’s teleportation programme. When he meets Beth, who looks more like Geena Davis than her stand-in did, he impresses her by attempting to teleport her potted plant from one end of the room to the other. This proves such a turn-on, in fact, that once Martin’s able to send an animal through the machine, Beth volunteers her pussy. Then she allows him to teleport her cat.

It’s not B-grade science without an Evil Mastermind, an honour that falls to Anton Bartok, one of those heh-heh-heh villains heartless enough to keep Martin’s dog, the victim of a failed experiment, chained up in a secret lab, and if you thought the big-screen Scooby Doo looked lame, get a load of this sucker. In a would-be touching scene, our hero sneaks into the lab to perform a mercy killing, which is understandable now his pet resembles the Tasmanian Devil (from the old Bugs Bunny cartoons) at the end of a decades-long booze-coke-hookers binge. So upsetting for him is this sequence (but not, trust us, for the audience), that when Beth attempts to comfort him, he tells her: “Stay out of my sector! You no longer have clearance!”

Turns out Martin is slowly transforming into Brundlefly II, much to Bartok’s glee as this important evolutionary breakthrough will make him the most powerful person on Earth....somehow. So Martin takes Beth to see Stathis Borans, the only returning character from the original, in the hope he’ll explain the plot, but instead he whines about how Brundle snr melted his hand and foot with fly vomit and performs his nightclub act. What did you have against Brundle, Stathis? “He bugged me!” Oh, come on, where’s your compassion? “It cost me an arm and a leg!” Thank you, folks, I’ll be here all week.

He’s not the only one with a sense of humour: Bartok has a Head Of Security named Scorby, leading to a scene where he wanders around shouting, “Scorby, where are you?” (we got some work to do now, etc.). As Brundlefly II rampages through the facility, anonymous henchmen say, “There’s no sign of him!” and “Nothing can get through those doors!” and you know *that* means. Hope they remembered their red shirts.

It all leads to a focus group-pleasing happy ending (!) with our heroes free to lead lives of spiritual fulfilment while the boo-hiss villain is transformed into a monster....who’s kept in a lab as a test subject. And they say there’s no justice.

ZOINKS!

Gary Chalk, who plays Scorby, also appeared as Vice Principal Grimes in *Scooby Doo! The Mystery Begins* (2009).

YOU CAN IMAGINE A CARTOON CHARACTER SAYING....

Stathis: "Striking family resemblance! Little big for five years old, aren't ya?"

Martin: "I have a chromosomal malfunction. I'm growing at an accelerated rate-"

Stathis: "No shit? That's fascinating. Well, it's been great..."

OR

Stathis: "Brundle stole my girl, your mother. Got her pregnant. Caused her death. Dissolved my hand and foot with fly vomit. I had no love for the man. He bugged me..."

OR

Martin: "Something odd is happening to me..."

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

Over the years, Mystery Incorporated has faced such adversaries as The Cicada Creature, The Giant Bees (foreign spies attempting to steal rocket fuel), The Giant Spider (a robot) and The Mantis, which was the disguise of an academic attempting to scare people away from oil land. Occasionally, bugs and insects can be used for good, such as when Velma used The Mail-Order Termite to apprehend The Totem Monster, who said he would've gotten away with it if it hadn't been for those meddling kids "and your termite, too."

SHOCKER (1989)

“No More Mr Nice Guy!”

Written & Directed by Wes Craven; Produced by Marianne Maddalena and Barin Kumar.

MEDDLING KIDS

Jonathan (Peter Berg) is The Hero/Leader

Alison (Cami Cooper) is The Doomed Girlfriend

Rhino (Richard Brooks) is The Funny Black Guy

UNHELPFUL ADULTS

Lt Parker (Michael Murphy) The Dad

Cooper (Sam Scarber) The No-Nonsense Coach

Pastori (Vincent Guastafarro) The Doomed Cop

VILLAIN

Horace Pinker (Mitch Pileggi – remember him in *The X Files*?)

There’s no art without commerce, they say, and no show without business, but those beloved of such aphorisms would do well to remember another: You can’t bottle lightning.

Part of a two-picture deal with Alive Films, Alice Cooper’s production company, *Shocker* was Wes Craven’s attempt to replicate the success of *A Nightmare On Elm Street*, which he was keen to do after losing rights to the Freddy Krueger character. *Elm St* had raised the director’s profile but hadn’t proved much of a payday, so the tentatively-titled *No More Mr Nice Guy* would give him a franchise villain he could own. It was less a movie than a business deal.

Following *Nightmare*, *Child’s Play* and *The Horror Show*, audiences must’ve grown tired of watching an executed serial killer stalk a cop from beyond the grave because the film opened to indifferent box office – it didn’t lose money, but it didn’t make enough to launch a franchise. Then again, viewers might’ve been uncertain if they were watching a horror film or a kiddie comedy. *Shocker* isn’t big on tension or suspense, but it excels at being wilfully stupid.

Krueger isn’t much of a punster in his debut, but Horace Pinker, his stand-in here, is played with such bug-eyed abandon by Mitch Pileggi that you’ll wonder why Craven didn’t go straight to Nicolas Cage. There isn’t a bad pun he won’t chase, a morsel of scenery he won’t chew or a line he won’t deliver without growling like a wrestler. Too bad he doesn’t wear a mask and cape in the movie.

Then there’s the local cops who, to put it mildly, get something of a bad rap. When they’re not clowning around, turning their back on an armed-to-the-teeth psycho or being outsmarted by a teenager, they’re allowing young Jonathan to wander onto a gore-splattered crime scene where Pinker has left a message written in blood above the hacked-up remains of his girlfriend. Unable to catch Pinker even though he drives a van with his name on the side, makes no attempt to conceal his identity and parks outside the scene of each murder, they’re still quick to doubt our hero when he identifies the killer and tracks him down....courtesy of a dream. You see, the boy has been plagued by visions since he ran into that goalpost (long story), and experiences the psycho’s crimes as they happen, a plot device that would become familiar to Pileggi, as *The X Files* used it every season. These visions can only mean one thing – Jonathan is Pinker’s son! And Lt Parker, our hero’s adopted dad, knew all along! So why didn’t he just arrest Pinker earlier, you ask? Well....you’ve heard of the suspension of disbelief, haven’t you?

You’ll need it when it the killer makes a Faustian pact using – what else? – black candles, battery cables and a TV. A hand emerges from the boob tube, and as a finger extends to prod Pinker in the chest, a scrambled voice says, “You got it, baby!” So this is a movie that works on multiple levels, entertaining the masses while proving that Satan is really a Blaxploitation villain.

This grants our boy the ability to switch bodies at random (try this at home and let us know how it works out, will you?). When he’s strapped into Old Sparky, having first had seven shades beat out of him for biting a guard’s lip, Pinker literally

burns up, leaving just a pile of smouldering clothes. “Jesus!” exclaims an astonished onlooker. “The Chair really kicks ass!”

Whatever you do, don’t miss the scene where Horace takes over a kid’s body, which according to critic Michael J Weldon had audiences howling with laughter. Every person our villain possesses starts to exhibit his limp and trademark scowl, and while watching a cute blonde girl’s sudden transformation into a snarling sicko is amusing enough, it’s nothing compared to the next scene....where she attacks Jonathan with a JCB digger. She also gets the film’s best line: “C’mon, you fucker! MOVE!” (Trust us, this *is* the best line).

It can’t get any sillier, you say? How about when Pinker transforms himself into an armchair (with eyes), only to be thwarted by the ghost of Jonathan’s girlfriend, who can shoot laser beams from her cleavage? Then there’s the grand finale, where our hero follows his nemesis into a television, chasing him through news programmes, old movies and a *Leave It To Beaver* re-run. “I’ve heard of audience participation,” thunders an outraged viewer, “but this is ridiculous!”

For all his power, though, Pinker is defeated with surprising ease, literally brought to his knees by the employment of a remote control. Watching his fast-forward/pause/rewind pratfalls, it’s hard not to be reminded of *Troll 2*’s witch, who after all was vanquished by a Bologna sandwich. *Shocker* has a few more brain cells than that – only a few, mind.

ZOINKS!

Years ago, when the town of Newhaven was a bustling vacation spot, a workman named Mr Voltner was electrocuted while attempting to repair a damaged power line, so now his ghost wanders through the town, intent on revenge....

Watt A Shocking Ghost might seem like just another episode of *The Scooby Doo Show*, but its writer, Donald F Glut, has the kind of resume best described as “varied.” After making horror/sci-fi shorts as a teenager, he graduated to writing for kids TV (*Transformers*, *X-Men*, *Spiderman And His Amazing Friends* etc) and directed the documentary *Hollywood Goes Ape*, a celebration of man-in-a-suit monkey business featuring contributions from Forrest J Ackerman, Bob Burns (remember him as the ape in *Ratpfink A Boo Boo?*) and Ray Harryhausen. In the late 90s, he segued into directing monster nudie films with the ultra-cheap, shot-in-a-field likes of *Dinosaur Valley Girls* (1996), *The Erotic Rites Of Countess Dracula* (2001), *The Mummy’s Kiss* (2003), *Countess Dracula’s Orgy Of Blood* (2004) and *The Mummy’s Kiss: 2nd Dynasty* (2006).

Weirdest of the lot (no mean feat) is *Blood Scarab* (2008), a senseless hodgepodge of new scenes and randomly-inserted footage from Glut’s earlier movies, which if nothing else answers the age-old question: “Did Egyptian women have silicone implants?” There are no masked villains or talking dogs here, but there’s a mummy, a group of vampires and a wisecracking Renfield that looks like Brad Dourif. There’s slapstick for the kids, action and raunchy gags for the teenagers, plus oiled handmaidens for mom and dad. It might be the greatest movie ever.

YOU CAN IMAGINE A CARTOON CHARACTER SAYING....

Jonathan: “We can’t go around killing people just to get Pinker out!”

OR

Pinker: “Come on, boy. Let’s talk a ride in my Volts-wagon...”

OR

Pinker: “Well, what’re you waiting for dickhead? You wanna fry me? Then get it over with, you bunch of fucking insects.”

Executioner: “You heard the man.”

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

Robopup, a robot guard dog under the control of The Ghost Of Chef Pierre Goulash (actually a thief trying to steal from the Blakes) was also halted by remote control. This episode of *A Pup Named Scooby Doo* was broadcast in November 1988 – eleven months before *Shocker*’s release. No conclusions here, just some food for thought.

I STILL KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER (1998)

“Someone Is Dying For A Second Chance....”

Directed by Danny (*Judge Dredd*) Cannon; Written by Trey Callaway; Produced by Neal H (*Urban Legend*) Moritz, Stokely C. Carmichael and Erik Feig.

MEDDLING KIDS

Julie (Jennifer Love Hewitt) is The Damsel In Distress

Ray (Freddie Prinze Jr) is The Hero/Leader

Karla (Brandy) is The Best Friend

Tyrell (Mekhi Phifer) is The Funny Black Guy

UNHELPFUL ADULTS

Mr Brooks (Jeffrey Combs) The Creepy Hotel Owner

Estes (Dick Gregory) The Sinister Housekeeper

Titus (Jack Black) The Stoner

VILLAINS

Ben Willis (Muse Watson)

Will Benson (Matthew Settle)

When *I Know What You Did Last Summer* grossed \$125m worldwide, Columbia, convinced they'd found the next *Scream*, immediately ordered more of the same, claiming the sequel was born out of the audience's desire to find out what happened to the characters and reminding us of William Goldman's opinion of such films. "Sequels are whores' movies," Goldman wrote. "People will come up with all kinds of bullshit for whoring." Bear in mind, that's a two-time Oscar-winner speaking.

I Still Know is a big-titted whore who looks like she could suck the bend out of a river, but up close and personal you can see crow's feet beneath her caked-on make-up, then as you get down to it you're searching for a coin-op slot because it's about as much fun as riding a waltzer on your own in an abandoned amusement park scheduled for demolition. The kind of shameful experience that causes a fella to reflect on what a fool he's been before pouring lighter fluid on his pecker and reaching for the matches with tear-soaked eyes.

Here's what happened to the characters: the body of Ben Willis, the hook-wielding fisherman who killed Sarah Michelle Gellar and Ryan Phillippe, was never found. The ending where he attacked Julie was all a dream. Everybody is alive and well and leading lives of spiritual fulfilment apart from Gellar and Phillippe, who are still dead.

Here's the plot: Julie keeps having nightmares, has drifted apart from Ray and is seeing "Will Benson", whose name is a play on "Ben Willis' Son." In order to lure Miss Goody Two Shoes to a secluded spot where he can slice and dice her, Will stages a fake radio phone-in, which Julie 'wins' by saying the capital of Brazil is Rio de Janeiro, so she and her jive-talking black sidekick, plus "Will Benson" travel to an empty hotel (run by Jeffrey Combs!) on a remote island during hurricane season where minor characters (the boatman, the maid – both black by the way) are murdered without being missed, a karaoke screen reads "I Still Know What You Did Last Summer" and The Sinister Custodian (also black) informs our heroine that the capital of Brazil is....Brasilia!

By which point, we were long past caring.

One person who does care is Ray, who doesn't need to wait until Will starts grinning like a shark to tell you he's the bad guy because the sumbitch nearly ran over him. When the cops prove unhelpful (what're the odds?), Ray escapes from the hospital, pawns Julie's ring for a Sam Colt Special, forces a boat captain to take him to Death Island during a hurricane and arrives just in time to confront Will...with a gun that goes *click*.

(If you're wondering, as we were, why Ray is smitten with someone so, ah, lightly educated, Julie's tube-tops, bikinis and

wet, clingy t-shirts ought to give you an idea).

More interesting than the leads, though, is the all-slumming supporting cast, which includes Combs, Jennifer Esposito, Dick Gregory and, in the role that made him famous, Jack Black. Before *High Fidelity* or *Shallow Hal*, before he was even a tech guy in *Enemy Of The State*, when he was known for *The Fan* and being cut out of *True Romance*, Black played Titus, the island's dreadlocked drug dealer, who wears a Hawaiian shirt, talks about "getting jiggy with it" and does a great impersonation of a saucer-eyed moron. There's a reason he's uncredited in the film: after five minutes in the presence of this loud and obnoxious clown, your brain will cut off its own oxygen supply rather than attempt to process any more of his shtick.

Sure, there are other movies with voodoo, lame humour and sinister black guys, but they were mostly made in the 1940s, so they don't star Freddie Prinze Jr, because if they did, they'd be *Scooby Doo* (2002), that other four-kids-on-a-creepy-island-with-a-dog movie. Here, the dog's owned by Combs, who tells one guest: "I've found pieces of guys like you in his stool."

Eat your heart out, Scrappy Doo.

ZOINKS!

When he's not running a hotel, Jeffrey Combs also plays Professor Hatecraft in *Scooby Doo Mystery Incorporated*.

YOU CAN IMAGINE A CARTOON CHARACTER SAYING....

Julie: "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It's been a year since my last confession. I've never told anyone this, not my mom, not the police, not even my friends. Except the ones who were there and...well, they're not around anymore. You see, I killed a man. But it was an accident!"

OR

Tyrell: "Let's head for the pantry!"

Karla: "Is that a good place to hide?"

Tyrell: "I dunno, I'm just fuckin' hungry."

OR

Titus (as the killer grabs a weapon): "Seriously, don't do that!"

OR

Tyrell: "It's a long fucked up story and you probably won't believe it anyway. All I know is, this is the worst vacation of my life. I'm tired, I'm hungry, I'm fucking horny and I ain't seen one goddamned psycho killer."

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

Given this film's somewhat primitive attitude towards African-Americans, it made perfect sense that when Freddie Prinze returned to Spooky Island as part of Mystery Incorporated, he and the gang should encounter a character billed as "Voodoo Maestro", played by Miguel A Nunez Jr, who had been The Doomed Black Guy in *The Return Of The Living Dead*, *Friday The 13th Part V: A New Beginning*, *Carnosaur 2* and *Leprechaun 4: In Space*.

HALLOWEEN RESURRECTION (2002)

“Evil Finds Its Way Home...”

Directed by Rick Rosenthal; Written by Larry Brand and Sean Hood; Produced by Paul Freeman and Michael Leahy.

MEDDLING KIDS

Sara (Bianca Kajlich) is The Damsel In Distress

Rudy (Sean Patrick Thomas) is The Doomed Best Friend

Donna (Daisy McCrackin) is The Slut

Jen (Katee Sackhoff) is The Bimbo

Bill (Thomas Ian Nicholas) is The Goofy Guy

Myles (Ryan Merriman) is The Nerd

UNHELPFUL ADULTS

Freddie (Busta Rhymes) The Funny Black Guy

Nora (Tyra Banks) The Bitch

Laurie (Jamie Lee Curtis) The Doomed Survivor From The Previous Movie

VILLAIN

Michael Myers (Brad Loree)

When *Alien: Resurrection* was in the theatres, the prospect of a *Halloween: Resurrection* (“The Night HE Went Into Space!”) would’ve tickled us. Needless to say, we’re not laughing now.

Mindboggling in its dopiness, sequel #7 at least starts as it means to go on – with credibility thrown to the wind. After explaining how Michael Myers survived being decapitated at the end of *Halloween H20* (“Ohmigod, she killed the wrong person!”) and doing away with the only other continuing character (RIP, Laurie), the movie attempts to wring a few more nickels and dimes out of the rubes before collapsing into self-parody as only a down-and-out franchise can. Over the next eighty-nine minutes, folks, prepare to see a once-proud horror icon being outsmarted by text-messaging teens, fought off by a Kung Fu fighting rapper and mocked by the Reality TV contestants getting high in his house.

These beanbags are part of “Dangertainment”, a show being broadcast from inside the Myers house on (you guessed it) Halloween night. If you believe in omens, then the news that Michael’s body has mysteriously vanished for the sixth time in twenty-four years, along with the discovery of his sister’s corpse, ought to tip you off that such behaviour is, you know, unwise. Unless you live inside a bubble where people don’t think or watch horror movies. Which this film certainly does.

In a house rigged with cameras, neither the directors nor the “millions” of viewers notice one poor sucker getting stabbed through the head, but of course everyone’s watching when the redhead starts making come-hither eyes at one of the guys, leads him somewhere private etc. Her gratuitous nude scene is then interrupted when ‘body parts’ (stamped “Made In Taiwan”) come crashing through the walls as part of an elaborate practical joke, which in fact is a thoughtful comment upon how technology has changed the delivery of the same old sleazy entertainment. You know – like watching this movie on Netflix not VHS.

You’ll hear Donald Pleasance turn over in his grave when Busta Rhymes, as the jive-talkin’ head of Dangertainment, kicks down a door with the zinger, “Trick or treat, Motherfucker!”, but before that he gets to fight Michael with mixed martial arts and before *that* he becomes the first person to tell Myers to “scoot, skedaddle, get the fuck outta Dodge” and walk away. There was some Y2K decree that stated every movie had to have a rapper fight the villain, so while LL Cool J battled super sharks and Ice-T fought Leprechaun in da hood, it must’ve made sense to someone, somewhere to have the guy who performed *Rumble In The Jungle* in the documentary *When We Were Kings* go a round with The Shape. Bet his name wasn’t John Carpenter.

This time-waster may not have much else going for it, but at least it offers an opportunity to play Slasher Movie Bingo. If

You've never played this before, the 'rules' are pretty straightforward. Each player writes down ten clichés ("The bodies have been removed" "Nobody misses the first victim" "It was a practical joke!" etc) and the winner is the first person to tick off all the items on their list. He gets a can of Easy Cheese.

YOU CAN REALLY REALLY REALLY IMAGINE A CARTOON CHARACTER SAYING...

Freddie (dressed as Michael, talking to the real Myers): "What the hell is wrong with you? I said, what the hell are you lookin' at me like that for? Huh? You don't get it? You don't get it? Your shit up there ain't workin' or somethin'? Huh? You need to get your ass back in the garage wit Nora! That's your job! Go back in there and help her ass out! Go do your job! I left the back door unlocked for your ass to go out and into the garage! That's what I did! You need to get the hell outta here! Go on, scoot, skedaddle, get the fuck outta Dodge!"

OR

Freddie: "Michael Myers is like a killer shark. He's some dude in baggy-ass overalls who gets his kicks from killing everyone and everything he comes across..."

OR

Rudy: "Hey, Michael! Yeah, I'm talkin' to you. You want a piece of me? You want some of this? Huh? You want to try to fucking kill me? You like sushi, motherfucker?"

OR

Freddie: "Oh shit! Who's knocking on my door this late? Whoever it is, is distractin' me from watching Wat Chun Lee whup some ass."

OR

Freddie: "Looking a little crispy there, Mikey. Like some chicken-fried motherfucker...."

OR

First Nurse: "Halloween. Three years ago. Twenty years after the first murders, her brother finally found her. Tracked her down at the school where she was working. There were several murders. Lots of confusion.

Second Nurse: "Ohmigod, she killed the wrong person!"

First Nurse: "Father of three."

Second Nurse: "Well, why didn't the paramedic say something?"

First Nurse: "His larynx had been crushed."

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

When horror movie legend Vincent Van Ghou, star of *The Mutant Bee* and *Dr Phobos* (as well as the *Scooby Doo Mystery Incorporated* episode *Night Fright*), had *his* reality TV show crashed by a man in a mask, the actor asked him to "pipe down", ignored him and continued his conversation. This gave Fred time to set a trap and unmask the culprit, who was revealed to be Argus Fentonpoof, a screenwriter who went bankrupt when the actor pulled out of his movie *Scream Scream It's Time For You To Die!*

THE MANGLER 2 (2002)

“You’ve Been Mangled!”

Written & Directed by Michael Hamilton Wright; Produced by Glen Tedham.

MEDDLING KIDS

Joanne (Chelse Swain) is The Damsel In Distress

Dan (Will Sanderson) is The Jock

Emily (Daniella Evangelista) is The Bimbo

Corey (Miles Meadows) is The Stoner

Will (Dexter Bell) is The Token Black Guy

UNHELPFUL ADULTS

Lecours (Phillippe Bergeron) The Surly Chef

Paul (David Christensensen) The Bodyguard

Janitor Bob (Jeff Doucette) The Porn-Loving Custodian

Ms Shaw (Brenda Campbell) The Boozy Teacher

VILLAINS

Headmaster Bradeen (Lance Henriksen)

A Home Computer.

It’s not every week that Tobe Hooper directs a Stephen King adaptation starring Robert Englund, but 1995’s *The Mangler* was an unspeakable horror the likes of which the world had never before seen, whose very existence disproved the possibility of a tender and merciful God. Naturally, they made not one but two straight-to-tape ‘seemquels’, so while film buffs debate whether *The Mangler Reborn* is better/worse, we’ll take *The Mangler 2* to task for a very simple reason: it wastes the talents of Lance Henriksen.

Wait, did we say “wastes”? Sorry, what we meant was “humiliates to the point we’re amazed he didn’t commit *seppuku* out of shame and embarrassment.” It just came out wrong.

Here’s why you won’t be seeing clips from this monsterpiece when it comes time to do Henriksen’s TV obits:

He’s billed as “Henricksen” in the end credits.

The filmmakers turn him into a man-machine hybrid by gluing wires to his face.

He sings *Wannabe* by The Spice Girls while gettin’ jiggy with it.

Here, the dependable genre icon plays another growly authority figure, this time the head of a “prestigious” private school that has roughly seven students, three tutors and looks like a deserted office building. The staff are pornography consumers and alcoholics, the cook is mean and surly (he’s French, you see) and the damn fool kids have just downloaded *Mangler 2.0*, a computer virus the web claims will destroy the lives of everyone you know. When “Henricksen” threatens to cancel the graduation prom following a practical joke, this pisses off Tuesday Addams lookalike Joanne no end so, taking advice from the Jack Torrance *Book Of Extreme Measures*, she uploads the virus to the school’s computer network.

This proves to be a bad idea. The school has recently installed an ultra-modern, high-tech security system, complete with electrified fences that could take down a 300lb gorilla, so once infected it goes all HAL 9000 and attempts to murder the students when they’re not skinny dipping or getting high. Nooses descend from the ceiling, axes fly off the walls and one poor unfortunate is pulled into a laundry press, but budgetary constraints mean we never see any actual carnage. Victims are pulled offscreen, a scream is heard and that’s all she wrote.

Attempting to stage a cutting-edge techno-thriller on a Roger Corman budget means that the “supercomputer” is a home PC with lots of coloured wires, the film’s big ‘stunt’ (a car crashing through a fence) is shown three times and the soundtrack consists mainly of low-grade rave music (what is this, *House Of The Dead?*), but if it calls itself a movie and believes it’s a real movie.....hey, let’s humour the filmmakers.

In his early scenes, “Henricksen” looks so intense he might explode, but he chills out once he’s been taken over by HAL, even asking Joanne if she’d like to check out his hard drive. “If I let you,” she says, “do you promise to stop killing people?”

Silence.

Then it happens:

“Tell me what you want, what you really, really want....”

Joanne, who’s more of an Insane Clown Posse kinda gal (they call themselves ‘juggalo’ girls) starts fighting back and soon realizes that, for an uber-villain bent on World Domination, “Henricksen” is shockingly easy to defeat. Pushing him backwards is enough to make him shoot sparks, spit milk and bow his head in surrender....as the actor probably did at the end of each day’s shooting.

ZOINKS!

Will Sanderson went on to become a regular in Uwe Boll’s films, appearing in *House Of The Dead*, *Bloodrayne*, *In The Name Of The King* and *Seed*. He was also in *Alone In The Dark*, whose straight-to-DVD sequel, sneakily titled *Alone In The Dark II*, starred Lance Henri(c)ksen.

YOU CAN IMAGINE A CARTOON CHARACTER SAYING...

Bradeen: “Hell hath no fury like a rebellious teenager. And a cook too!” (Seriously, can’t you imagine a Scooby villain saying that?)

OR

Emily: “If you think I’m gonna sleep with you...”

Corey: “All the time!”

OR

Corey: “Ask not what you can do for your drug dealer, ask what your drug dealer can do for you!”

OR

Emily: “A waist is a terrible thing to mind.”

OR

Corey: “Take the chemical silicone. It’s not gonna make a computer run faster. But put it in a woman’s body and....voyla!”

OR

Emily (hearing Lecours trapped in the freezer): “That better not be a cow!”

OR

Lecours (emerging from the freezer): “I’ve had women colder than this!”

OR

Joanne: “I don’t know where you’re trying to push me right now.”

Emily: “The check-out counter marked Ten Stupid Ideas Or Less?”

Joanne: “Sure beats The Bitch Isle!”

OR

Lecours (noticing Dan looking up Emily's skirt): "Take a picture. It'll last longer."

OR

Corey: "I'm still hungry."

Lecours: "The kitchen is closed! Actually....I could make some pate from your liver."

OR

Will: "Suck the crack of my black ass!"

OR

Lecours: "I hate American teenagers!"

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

In *Scooby Doo And The Cyber Chase*, a college student creates a virus to infect a rival's computer and prevent him from winning a competition. As Mystery Incorporated investigate, it manifests itself as The Phantom Virus, a monster voiced by Tyler Perry regular Gary Sturgis, that traps them inside a videogame where they have to collect Scooby Snacks in order to complete each level. Weirdly, it was released four months before *Mangler 2*.

FREDDY VS JASON (2003)

“Evil Will Battle Evil.”

Directed by Ronny You; Written by Damian Shannon and Mark Swift; Produced by Sean S Cunningham.

MEDDLING KIDS

Lori (Monica Keena) is The Damsel In Distress

Will (Jason Ritter) is The Hunky Guy

Kia (Kelly Rowland) is The Funny Black Chick

Mark (Brendan Fletcher) is The Doomed Best Friend

Gibb (Katherine Isabelle) is The Slut

Freeburg (Kyle Labine) is The Stoner

UNHELPFUL ADULTS

Stubbs (Lochlyn Munro) The Deputy

Dr Campbell (Tom Butler) The Creepy Scientist

Williams (Garry Chalk – remember him from *The Fly II*?) The Sheriff

VILLAINS

Freddy Krueger (Robert Englund)

Jason Voorhees (Ken Kirzinger)

New Line Cinema & Paramount Pictures

In 2003, a conflict many had predicted for over a decade began as two former allies with competing ideologies engaged in a bitter and bloody feud that left a trail of needless destruction in its wake....but enough about Iraq. *Freddy Vs Jason* is about two cartoonish bogeymen, so it's completely different. Then again, both were about thinly-veiled greed that had serious repercussions for American teens, except in the film those teenagers are mostly white.

Part of a Dubya-sanctioned plot to lower expectations, dull sensations and make you forget there was a war on, *Freddy Vs Jason* is less a movie than an experiment from Dr Frank N Furter's lab, and any criticism of the end product will be met with a curt “I didn't make him for *you*!” It took the Supercomputers that spit out ‘high-concept’ scripts fifteen years to produce a draft anyone wanted to make, and they must've melted down from the strain on several occasions because the narrative packs in more mind-bending ideas than a collaboration between William Burroughs and Philip K Dick. In a scene likely to stun an unprepared viewer, Freddy bounces Jason off the walls (complete with pinball machine sound effects), shouts “Tilt!” and – get this – makes a wanker gesture. Also immensely taxing was the creation of the rich, complex characters: the Final Girl that doesn't drink or do drugs and has been looking after dad since mom died (yet appears to have had an unnatural maturation of the mammary glands); The Stoner, whose ride is referred to as a “Scoobyvan”; the Unhelpful Sheriff etc. At least the experience of being ruled by a repellent creep proved useful to Kelly Rowland – she went on to become an *X Factor* judge.

The Elm Street kids have forgotten about Freddy, causing him to lose his powers, so he recruits Jason to....oh, who cares? The only time the film had any resonance for us was when Zack Ward appeared as Brendan Fletcher's brother – they both went on to become regulars in Uwe Boll's films. *Freddy Vs Jason* caters to the same crowd, is loaded with mind-boggingly awful dialogue and plays like one of Boll's videogame adaptations, but unlike *House Of The Dead*, it doesn't have the decency to be “So Bad It's Good.” All told, this is not a movie anyone will be watching at their local rep house in 2028.

We're not suggesting films like this shouldn't be made, just that they shouldn't be allowed near multiplexes. If profiting from rip-offs is all you wish to do, then The Asylum – who have yet to post a loss – are the model to follow. Their laughably cheap mockbusters cost next to nothing, show a profit after three months and enjoy a healthy following on the

SyFy channel – leaving theatres free for filmmakers with actual stories to tell.

YOU CAN IMAGINE A CARTOON CHARACTER SAYING....

Freeburg: “Dude, that goalie was pissed about something...”

OR

Lori: “You can’t trust the police. You can’t trust any of the adults!”

OR

Kia (to Freddy): “So you’re the one everyone’s afraid of? Tell me something. What kind of faggot runs around in a Christmas sweater?”

OR

Freeburg: “Man, screw that clown. I mean, what kind of pussy comes after you in your dreams anyway?”

OR

Will: “You got what you wanted, you pulled Freddy out. Now he’s fighting Jason. Come on, what more do you want?”

Lori: “He killed my mother, Will. It was Freddy. My father covered it up to protect me. He didn’t do it.”

Will: “Oh my God!”

Lori: “Look, he has taken everything from us. He has ruined both of our pasts. I am not leaving until I see him die...”

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

When it comes to bizarre crossovers, Scooby is the hands down, unparalleled champion. Over the years, Mystery Incorporated has been aided and abetted by the likes of The Addams Family, Batman, Captain Caveman, Phyllis Diller, Cass Elliot, Harlan Ellison, The Flintstones, The Harlem Globetrotters, Josie And The Pussycats, KISS, Laurel & Hardy, The Three Stooges and Dick Van Dyke, among others. They’ve even encountered Freddy and Jason, after a fashion: the *Scooby Doo Mystery Incorporated* episode *Web Of The Dreamweaver* features a very Fred Krueger-ish villain, while *Scooby Doo! Camp Scare* is a funny pastiche of the *Friday The 13th* films.

HOUSE OF WAX (2005)

“Prey. Slay. Display.”

Directed by Jaume Collet-Serra; Written by Chad & Carey Hayes; Produced by Joel Silver, Robert Zemeckis and Susan Levin.

MEDDLING KIDS

Carly (Elisha Cuthbert) is The Damsel In Distress

Paige (Paris Hilton) is The Slut

Wade (Jared Padalecki) is The Hunky Guy

Nick (Chad Michael Murray) is The Bad Boy

Dalton (Jon Abrahams) is The Goofy Guy

Blake (Robert Richard) is The Token Black Guy

VILLAINS

Vincent & Bo (Brian Van Holt)

Most of us will never be in a situation where our friends are being turned into wax dummies by twin brothers – one pure evil, one disfigured and homicidal – but you’d think Jack Bauer’s daughter would realize that if you accept a lift from a gap-toothed redneck to a town that’s not on GPS, there may be danger ahead. Then again, she has Paris Hilton’s number on speed dial, so maybe not.

Upon arrival in Ambrose, where the cinema is showing *Whatever Happened To Baby Jane?* and the only other attraction is a building whose walls, floors and residents are made of wax, our heroes naturally decide to stay and have a poke around. The place is deserted save for Bo, who you wouldn’t consider the trustworthy sort because his home is filled with creepy wax masks and fetus-in-formaldehyde jars. Also, they recognise his pick-up as the vehicle that followed them the night before, when they were trying to decide whether or not to camp next to a roadkill dump, but by then it’s too late. Wade has already been captured and is having his body shaved in preparation for being turned into a wax figure by Bo’s evil twin, who by the way looks a helluva lot like Tommy Wiseau.

You see, Ambrose is something of a “model community” – all the inhabitants are wax dummies. It exists, we think, for the purpose of baiting meddling kids. Not sure how that pays the bills, though. Unlike your usual cartoon villain, Bo isn’t running it to draw attention away from a scheme to heist treasure. His motivation is that he’s batshit nuts, and a sadist to boot. When he wants to silence Carly, he doesn’t say “Hush”, he glues her lips shut. When she tries raising the alarm, he cuts off the tip of her finger.

So he’s more forceful in his methods than some bozo in a costume, but he’s still cut from the same cloth. He has a windowless lair with secret tunnels, chases our danger-prone heroine through a theatre as the movie plays and is fooled by her cunning ruse of disguising herself as one of his mannequins. Nobody comes up with a plan to capture him, though, unless whimpering “Please don’t kill me” and running *upstairs* as the wax house melts around them constitutes a masterstroke.

Astute readers will have noticed that this bears scant resemblance to the 1953 Vincent Price movie. That’s because it’s really an uncredited rip-off of David Schmoeller’s *Tourist Trap* (1979), where Chuck Connors’ strangely lifelike dummies baited another batch of disposable teens, including a pre-James Bond Tanya Roberts. In fact, considering this not-really-a-remake was cranked out by Dark Castle, whose main competitor, Platinum Dunes, had just enjoyed success by remaking *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* very badly, a more appropriate title might’ve been *The Wannabe Chainsaw Massacre*.

Stealing your title from one movie, your plot from another and trying to generate publicity with the gimmick casting of a stupid spoiled slut whore socialite seemed to us dishonest and more than a tad desperate. They might’ve gotten away with it, though, if you damn kids had actually gone to see it.

YOU CAN IMAGINE A SCOOBY CHARACTER SAYING...

Carly: “I just saw somebody!”

Wade: “It was probably a wax thing.”

Carly: “No, no, it wasn’t a wax thing it was moving and it was freaky looking!”

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

We would’ve preferred a rip-off of *Terror In The Wax Museum* (1973) whose screenwriter, Jameson Brewer, also wrote for *The New Scooby Doo Movies*. Brewer must’ve learned a trick or two from Mystery Inc because *Terror* is about a villain searching for treasure who fools the all-slumming cast, including Ray Milland, Elsa Lanchester and Broderick Crawford, by disguising himself as a wax model of Jack The Ripper. You can see the other ‘wax figures’ moving, so he chose wisely.

BLACK CHRISTMAS (2006)

“Terror Is Coming Home For The Holidays!”

Directed by Glen Morgan; Written by Morgan, based on a script by Roy Moore; Produced by Morgan, James Wong, Steven Hoban, Marty Adelstein, Dawn Parouse and Victor Solnicki.

MEDDLING KIDS

Kelly (Katie Cassidy) is The Blonde

Dana (Lacey Chabert) is The Brunette

Heather (Mary Elizabeth Winstead) is The Smart Girl

Kyle (Oliver Hudson) is The Hunky Guy

Melissa (Michelle Trachtenberg) is The Bitch

Lauren (Crystal Lowe) is The Bimbo

UNHELPFUL ADULTS

Mrs Mac (Andrea Martin) The Housekeeper

Leigh (Kristen Cloke) The Mysterious Stranger

VILLAINS

Billy Lenz (Robert Mann)

Agnes (Dean Friss)

This is the seasonal horror opus that isn't *Bloody Christmas*, *Christmas Evil*, *Christmas With The Dead*, *The Christmas Season Massacre*, *A Cadaver Christmas*, *Deadly Little Christmas*, *Don't Open Till Christmas*, *Bikini Blood Bath Christmas*, *One Hell Of A Christmas*, *The 13th Day Of Christmas*, *Santa Claws*, *Satan Claus*, *Santa's Slay*, *Slayer Santa*, *Psycho Santa*, *Hate's Haunted Slay Ride*, *Silent Night*, *Silent Night Bloody Night*, *Silent Night Deadly Night*, *Silent Night Zombie Night*, *Violent Night: The Movie*, *Tinsel* or *Jack Frost*. It's a remake/rip-off of Bob Clark's 1974 film from the company that remade/ripped off *Piranha*, *Halloween* and *Pulse*, down in the tacky, low-rent tradition of the remake/rip-offs of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *The Toolbox Murders*, *Day of the Dead*, *The Fog*, *The Omen*, *Sisters*, *When A Stranger Calls*, *The Wicker Man*, *The Hitcher*, *April Fools' Day*, *It's Alive*, *Last House On The Left*, *Long Weekend*, *Prom Night*, *Friday The 13th*, *My Bloody Valentine*, *Night of the Demons*, *Sorority Row*, *The Amityville Horror*, *A Nightmare On Elm Street* etc. There are no murdering mutant snowmen in the film and the villain doesn't make wisecracks or kill anyone while dressed as Santa but otherwise it offers pretty much what you'd expect.

Dimension Films is like a sausage machine: whatever you put in, *Scream* comes out. Or in this case, *Scream*-lite. Given what 70s exploitation films achieved with limited resources, you'd think a slick modern version would have ambitions beyond being a Moron Movie, and if you missed the *Texas Chainsaw* revamp, you might even expect it to stick to the original template. But barely-glimpsed killers don't appear on magazine covers or in music videos, and they don't win MTV awards if their presence is suggested by shadows, heavy breathing or an eye at a peephole. You have to give the target demographic a hissable villain who's more memorable than the meddling kids.

There are no well-rounded characters stuck inside the Delta Alpha Kappa Sorority House with a pair of psychos on Christmas Eve, just some interchangeable hotties who shower, scream, wander off on their own etc, so instead the movie lingers on the backstory of its lead sicko. Born with a liver disease that gave him yellow skin (as well as an uncanny resemblance to *Sin City's* Yellow Bastard character), Billy Lenz saw his father being butchered by his mom, who then used him as a sperm donor and kept him in the attic while she raised his daughter/sister, little realizing he'd one day cut her into cookies before being sent to an asylum where the doors don't close properly and the guard has 'cannon fodder' written all over him. Reunited with the fruit of his loins in Delta Alpha Kappa's attic, Ol' Bill goes on the rampage before Final Girl Kelly torches the place, which our boy of course survives with only third degree burns, leading to a final reel cat-and-mouse game in a suspiciously empty hospital.

We'd like to be able to tell you more about this one, Brethren, say something witty and original, but it's too much like trying to judge Elvis impersonator #19 at a lookalikes contest. So we thought: if the filmmakers didn't trouble themselves with wit and originality, why should we? Nobody wants to draw attention to a third-rate covers band.

ZOINKS!

Michelle Trachtenberg played Dawn Summers, a member of the 'Scooby Gang', in *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*.

YOU CAN IMAGINE A CARTOON CHARACTER SAYING....

Leigh: "Fuck you, Santa Claus!"

OR

Santa: "Ever seen the back seat of a sleigh?"

OR

Heather: "I'm really not okay with any of this. I mean, buying a present for a serial killer?"

Melissa: "No, you see, serial killers murder repeatedly for sexual thrill. Billy Lenz was a spree killer – dude just fucking lost it!"

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

In *A Scooby Doo Christmas*, the gang encounter a headless snowman (actually an academic trying to steal gold) that has destroyed the festive season for the residents of Winter Hollow. He's apprehended following a climactic chase, but Glen Morgan, who ruined *Black Christmas* for everybody, remains at large.

THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE: THE BEGINNING (2006)

“The Only Thing More Shocking Than How It Ended Is How It Began!”

Directed by Jonathan Liebesman; Written by Sheldon Turner; Produced by Michael Bay, Brad Fuller, Andrew Form and Mike Fleiss.

MEDDLING KIDS

Chrissie (Jordana Brewster) is The Brunette

Bailey (Diora Baird) is The Blonde

Deon (Taylor Handley) is The Strong Brother

Eric (Matt Bomer) is The Weak Brother

VILLAINS

Leatherface (Andrew Bryniarski)

Hoyt (R Lee Ermey)

Tea Lady (Kathy Lamkin)

The chainsaw may have been invented in Germany, but only in Texas could it achieve notoriety, which it found courtesy of one Thomas Hewitt, aka Leatherface. Born in 1939 to a lightly educated factory worker, found in a dumpster by a bag lady, Hewitt didn't come into his own until he lost his job at the slaughterhouse, aged thirty. *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning* tells his story.

Some critics have unkindly suggested that this prequel is déjà vu all over again, another lazy, cynical cash-in that offers nothing except tenth-hand shtick and a quartet of 'teens' that belong in 2006, not 1969 where the story takes place. They're right. According to this movie, nobody living in '69 listened to The Doors or Hendrix, they didn't wear Rolling Stones t-shirts, dress like John Lennon or have shoulder length hair, they just talked about The Nam in between discovering the joys of premarital sex.

In fact, all that separates *Beginning* from any other movie is lots of talk about the draft, specifically the dodging of it. These two brothers, Dean and Eric, who each have hot girlfriends – one blonde, one brunette, so they can tell them apart – are on their way to do their bit for God and Country and Oliver Stone's future career when Eric gets cold feet and considers hightailing it to Mexico. This sits none too well with his bro, a proud patriot, or as the Democrats seem to think, a yahoo reprogrammed by Corporate-owned news media to believe in lies. So Eric burns up his draft card right in front of him, which so upsets Dean that he drives straight into a cow. No kidding – he takes his eyes off the road for a second, and next thing you know, there's beef stew everywhere.

Fortunately, the law are quick to respond. Unfortunately, the law in these parts is Sheriff Hoyt, who's not really a Sheriff, just a cannibal with a bad attitude and Leatherface for a stepson. He probably voted for Nixon. Anyway, if there's one thing he hates, other than homosexuals, minorities, Yankees and, come to think of it, guys that use public toilets and leave sprinkles on the seat, it's draft dodgers, so when he finds Eric's card in the wreckage he is, to put it mildly, a tad displeased. Or to give you a clearer picture, if you took a scolded-ass ape and a Rottweiler with turpented balls, tied them together in a sack and threw the sack into the middle of a casting call for a teen drama, you'd have the rest of this movie. Watching them escape and attack people might be fun for a while, especially since you don't like the people being attacked, but ultimately it's tiresome and pointless.

It's too much to hope for a movie that deals with adult themes, has a few memorable lines and isn't shot like a music video, especially if it's produced by Michael Bay. To give The Great Satan credit, though, every movie unveiled under the Platinum Dunes banner has a certain consistency and an easily recognisable visual style. They're *all* a plotless, overstylized, sluggish mess.

If *Beginning* had some cheesy laughs, it might've been a fun guilty pleasure. But you can get that from *Texas Chainsaw 3D*, which was made by other hands, so you needn't bother with this boring failure.

ZOINKS!

Director Jonathan Liebesman's debut feature, *Darkness Falls*, was such a bad experience that the filmmaker considered quitting the business until Bay and co lured him back to direct this movie. They later gave him the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* reboot – starring Megan Fox.

YOU CAN IMAGINE A SCOOPY VILLAIN SAYING...

Hoyt: "This is redemption, Lady, that's what this is! Oh, you're all gonna pay for your sins. That's right!"

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

Remember the quote that came out of the war – "We had to destroy the village in order to save it"? It inspired Dubya's foreign policy, some say. It also inspired the villain in the *Mystery Incorporated* episode *The Siren's Song*, who when captured attempting to blow up an oil rig explained, "We have to destroy the environment in order to save it!" He would've gotten away with it, too, if it hadn't been for four draft dodgers and their conscientious objector dog.

FRIDAY THE 13TH (2009)

“Welcome To Crystal Lake”

Directed by Marcus Nispel(*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*); ‘Written’ by Damian Shannon & Mark Swift (*Freddy Vs Jason*), based on a script by Victor Miller that was based on a movie directed by John Carpenter yes it was just admit it; Produced by Sean S Cunningham, Andrew Form, Brad Fuller, Michael Bay and (probably) Louis Cyphre.

MEDDLING KIDS

Clay (Jared Padalecki) is The Hero/Leader

Whitney (Amanda Righetti) is The Damsel In Distress

Jenna (Danielle Panabaker) is The Smart Girl

Richie (Ben Feldman) is The Stoner

Trent (Travis Van Winkle) is The Jock

Lawrence (Arlen Escarpeta) is The Token Black Guy

Chewie (Aaron Yoo) is The Funny Little Asian Guy

Amanda (America Olivo) is Doomed Slut #1

Chelsea (Willa Ford) is Doomed Slut #2

Bree (Julianna Guill) is Doomed Slut #3

UNHELPFUL ADULT

Bracke (Richard Burgi) The Detective

VILLAIN

Jason Voorhees (Derek Mears)

Friday The 13th movies are like religions – no matter which one you choose as your favourite, you’ll offend somebody who prefers another, even though the differences aren’t great. For us, it was always *Part II* because there’s something about a villain who isn’t afraid the wear a sack with a single eyehole. Well, that and the scene where the skinny-dipping hottie lets you see all the way to Hawaii.

Brace yourselves, for this may come as a surprise, but do you think there is just the slightest chance that a character who has been drowned, axed, macheted, killed by Corey Feldman, cremated, aped by a copycat, resurrected by lightning/telekinesis/ possession/an underwater power surge, melted by toxic waste, blown up by an FBI task force, sent to hell, sent into space and returned to the present for a grudge match with Freddy might’ve become...you know...a tad over-familiar? Have, dare we say it, outstayed his welcome? A movie about a guy that wears the same clothes and performs the same shtick shouldn’t be called *Friday The 13th*. It should be called *Jason Voorhees, Where Are You?*

When characters with no surnames sit around the campfire and re-re-re-re-tell the story of Mrs Voorhees and her boy moments before the big fella turns up, machete in hand, it’s hard not to be reminded of all those parodies....including *Scooby Doo! Camp Scare*. But this film’s tongue isn’t in its cheek, and it’s not aiming for post-modernism, irony or even nostalgia. Once again, Michael Bay is not making a movie – he is selling a product.

There’s drug humour, creepy locals and an incompetent sheriff, plus a hee-hawing redneck who sells weed (“It’ll fuck your shit up, boy! Good times!”), reads porn (“You like that, bitch?”) and romances the mannequin in his barn (“Remember that special night we had? I’m gonna pound you so hard!”), so the IQ level of its characters is set remarkably low remarkably early (kids: Crystal Lake is no place for topless water-skiing, okay?). In fact, all that’s missing are a few cries of “He’s behind you, Scooby!” Because Jason usually is. For almost every kill.

The comic relief here is the same stock character it was in *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* – the Funny Little Asian Guy. Aaron Yoo talks to his bong in a funny voice, compares his penis to a hockey stick and performs some pratfalls that end up

with furniture being broken. This necessitates a trip to the woodshed, and you know what *that* means. Yes, the token ethnic guy wanders off alone, in the dark, to his doom. It's like *Scream* never happened.

It's apt that Marcus Nispel, who the trailer reminds us is "the director of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*", should find his way to Crystal Lake as a hired gun for Platinum Dunes because he and Michael Bay are such kindred spirits – two directors from the world of commercials and rock videos that choose their projects with the instincts of marketers, not filmmakers. We've seen those instincts applied to a beloved franchise before. Remember Scrappy Doo?

In other words, Platinum Dunes represents everything that Bill Hicks railed against in the early 90s. If you're unfamiliar with Hicks, he's the Chomsky-reading stand-up who said that if you work in marketing or advertising, there is no rationalization for what you do and you are all Satan's Little Helpers, filling the world with vile garbage. So kill yourself. You are the ruiners of all things good, you soulless, ball-less Corporate Puppet suckers of Satan's pecker stop putting a dollar sign on everything on this planet suck a tailpipe, hang yourself, borrow a gun from an NRA friend, I don't care how you do it rid the world of your evil machinations kill yourself kill yourself kill yourself.

If Hicks was alive today he'd be....clawing at the lid of his coffin. But whether he's onstage or doing a talk show or hosting *The Daily Show* – whatever you see him doing in this alternate universe – you can bet there would be one filmmaker in his sights.

Then again, it's possible he might've enjoyed *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *The Amityville Horror*, *Texas Chainsaw: The Beginning*, *The Hitcher*, *The Unborn*, *Horsemen*, *Friday The 13th* and *A Nightmare On Elm Street*.

Nah.

YOU CAN IMAGINE SHAGGY HANDING JASON A HOCKEY STICK AND SAYING...

Chewie: "Are you looking for this? Because it completes your outfit...."

WHAT WOULD SCOOPY DO?

The gang become summer camp counsellors in *Scooby Doo! Camp Scare* and battle The Woodsman, an axe-wielding zombie that's really the disguise of Ranger Knudsen, who was searching for the treasure at the bottom of Big Moose Lake.

THE FINAL WORD

“As the eviscerations ensue, the truth becomes undeniable: this is easily the most gruesome, most pointless episode of *Scooby Doo* ever.”

The *Boston Globe* on *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003).

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