

BOOK REVIEW: Cult Cinema: An Arrow Video Companion

RODGERS, Diane <<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3117-4308>>

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**Review: CULT CINEMA: AN ARROW VIDEO COMPANION Ed. Anthony Nield
(Arrow Films, 2016, Hardcover Ltd. Edition 250 pages)**

BY DIANE A. RODGERS

As the introduction explains, this is not an attempt at a definitive guide but rather to be a companion piece to some of the films released on the Arrow label; to extend enjoyment and expand upon some of the cult material for fans old and new. A significant portion of the text here has been recycled from Arrow's already-published DVD and Blu-Ray booklets, but this is made clear from the outset (also noted throughout where relevant) and collectors may appreciate the comprehensive assortment here in book form nonetheless, alongside new and extended discussions.

Arrow Video's book provides a whistle-stop tour of the great and the good of cult, horror and genre cinema here, arranged nicely into sub-sections focusing on cult movies, directors, actors, genres and distribution respectively. An overview of the topics conjures up a nostalgic mixture of fare presented on cult TV shows like Videodrome, or The Incredibly Strange Film Show; as director Ben Wheatley aptly notes in his foreword, "I'm profoundly jealous of anybody coming fresh to the back catalogue of world and genre cinema. It's mind expanding and f*****g great." Long standing cult film fans may well be more than happy to revisit examinations of Deep Red, Zombie Flesh Eaters, Withnail and I, The 'Burbs and others whilst those just beginning to discover these hidden pleasures (of whom I share Ben Wheatley's envy) are well directed toward classic gems.

Directors like David Cronenberg, Tinto Brass, Wes Craven and George A. Romero are deservedly examined; whilst it is glorious to see Lloyd Kaufman (of Troma films) included in such an illustrious list, it is a shame that no female directors are noted. This is redressed somewhat in the section on actors, with the inclusion of chapters on Meiko Kaji and Pam Grier alongside Vincent Price and Boris Karloff. Cult sub-genres under review range from the well-known spaghetti western and giallo through to the less-obvious Brazilian 1970s sexploitation genre 'Pornochanchada' and Canuxploitation (post-1990s Canadian B-movies), amongst others. The final section on distribution is good to see, as the mechanics behind and social context of cult cinema can often be at least interesting as the films themselves. These chapters provide overviews of the early days of cult and exploitation cinema, a look at the Super-8 format, film festivals, fanzines and the more recent Asian DVD explosion.

It is a shame that in a glossy presentation like this, clearly aimed at fans, where film posters are presented near full-page, the decision has been made to treat images of film stills like columns of text, split in half with a thick white line. Nonetheless, this is a very clear and accessible look at cult cinema, with the inclusion of some less obvious subject matter alongside must-see classics which would remiss to exclude in a companion such as this.