

Review by Will Strong

Predators

In this 3rd installment in the Predator franchise (or fifth if you count the two Alien vs.. Predator films), a motley crew Earth's toughest badasses are abducted and unceremoniously dumped on a distant jungle planet to serve as sport for the bloodthirsty Predators. What follows is a desperate fight for survival against, not only the fearsome alien hunters, but themselves as well. Featuring a surprisingly strong cast which includes an Oscar winner (Adrien Brody -oddly very good in the hard man lead role) an Oscar nominee (Lawrence Fishburne-mad as a meat axe) and a sitcom star (Topher Grace- creepy), and produced and written by Robert Rodriguez, Predators is, to say the least a rather odd beast. On one level its a complete homage to the 1987 original, right down to the jungle setting, familiar one liners and note for note use of the Predator theme music. On the other level it seems to be a film that could have been so much more than the sum of its parts.

For example - its called Predators but there only seems to be four of them in the entire film, the jungle planet is unoriginal, looks like any other earthbound forest and not the least bit alien, also the whole thing seems to have been restrained by a lack of budget meaning that the action scenes, whilst very good, are simply not as big as the film's trailer seemed to indicate. On the plus side - its never less than entertaining, the performances are very good - especially Brody and Fishburne, the SFX are top notch and it rockets along at a fine old pace meaning one is never bored. So how does it rate against the original Schwarzenegger original? answer: nowhere near as good, but its certainly on a par with Predator 2 and alot better than the AVP movies (however I must be the only person in the universe to be a fan of those!). Recommended

ACTION 3/5 FILM 3.5/5

If you liked this see: Predator; Predator 2; Aliens



Shoot The Hero! *Review by Mike Parkin*

This is one of those movies with different storylines that converge for the big finale. A team of bank-robbers double-cross their leader, a bickering couple are caught up in the robbery and manage to make off with some of the loot, a pair of assassins accidentally trespass on a highly armed and dangerous militia's compound, and a crime boss tries to keep a tight hold of his empire.

The cast is pretty interesting, including a nice guest appearance from Fred "The Hammer" Williamson. Whilst Christian Sesma doesn't quite cut it in the director's chair (too much shakycam and stupid camera angles), his script is pretty good in places, especially the dialogue scenes between Nate and Kate at the beginning, and anytime The Smith Brothers are on screen.

ACTION 2/5 FILM 2/5

If you liked this, try: True Romance, Date Night, Pineapple Express



30 Days Of Night: Dark Days (18) *Review by Richard Hawes*

Striking Alaskan landscapes and a high-calibre cast are sadly missing from this sequel to David Slade's 2007 adaptation of Steve Niles' vampire comic. But while there are budgetary differences there is at least creative continuity and credibility here. Creator Niles' adapting the second part of his original trilogy with writer/director Ben Ketai who has a history with the franchise of his own; he wrote the web-series 30 Days of Night: Blood Trails (2007). Picking up where the first film left off, unknown Kiele Sanchez steps into the role previously played by Melissa George and delivers a strong performance as the vengeful, vampire-hunting widow. There are a handful of impressive money shots but as a whole the film feels as unremarkable as most other direct-to-DVD sequels.

ACTION 2/5 FILM 3/5

If you liked this try Against the Dark, Vampires: Los Muertos, Blade: Trinity

By Phil Hobden
<http://combatfilm.blogspot.com>



COMBAT FILM/REVIEWS





Freight (18 tbc, DVD) *Reviewed By Matt Duddy*

Businessman Gabe Taylor, (Billy Murray) falls foul of a Romanian gang who are illegally trafficking Eastern European women into the sex trade. Initially Gabe thinks that their dispute has been concluded, however, when his son is killed in an illegal cage fight run by the Romanians and his daughter kidnapped on the eve of her wedding day, Gabe decides that it is time to fight back and show the Romanians the true face of his business empire. In the same vein as "Taken" this is a tough no holds barred British thriller that hits you like a freight train. A mesmerising performance from Danny Midwinter as the leader of the Romanian gang ably supported by Billy Murray and Craig Fairbrass, this is another of the recent crop of British indie films not to be missed.

ACTION 4/5 FILM 4/5

If you liked this, try; *Taken, Dead Cert, Rise of the Footsoldier*



Jaguar Lives! (15) *Review by Richard Hawes*

After Enter the Dragon (1973) combined kung fu with Bond movie conventions, producers churned out a whole slew of imitations, where possible employing cast members from legitimate Bond films (notably George Lazenby) to aid in marketing. The makers of Jaguar Lives! hedged their bets by recruiting not one, but three major Bond villains, reserving the lead role for an unknown they hoped would turn out to be another Chuck Norris. American karate champion Joe Lewis failed to make much of an impact with audiences as globe-trotting secret agent Jonathan Cross, codenamed Jaguar, and his only adventure was consigned to obscurity soon after its release in 1979. Now available on DVD, though sadly not in widescreen, it's lively stunt-packed nonsense and perfect for late night viewing.

ACTION 3/5 FILM 2/5

If you liked this try *The Man from Hong Kong, Death Dimension, Operation Cobra*



31 North 62 East (DVD, 15) *Reviewed By Matt Duddy*

When an SAS unit in Afghanistan is attacked, the sister of its Captain, Jill Mandelson (Heather Peace) embarks on a dangerous mission to uncover the truth. Realising that the unit's position was given up by a high ranking member of the UK government in order to securely broker an arms deal which will inject funds into the economy, Mandelson kidnaps a government spin doctor hoping that the truth will be revealed via an internet confession. Focussing on current issues and asking more questions than it answers, this could easily be a DTV film (especially with the inclusion of Ultimate Force's Heather Peace). A simmering political thriller with half decent performances but sadly no real answers.

ACTION 1/5 FILM 2/5

If you liked this, try; *Bravo Two Zero, Ultimate Force TV Series, Soldier Soldier*

PHIL'S ROUND UP:

UFC 115: LIDDELL v FRANKLIN (DVD, £17.99) featured what would be the legend Chuck Liddell's final octagon performance as well as an stacked under card with Paulo Thiago, Martin Kampmann, James Wilks and Mirko Cro op

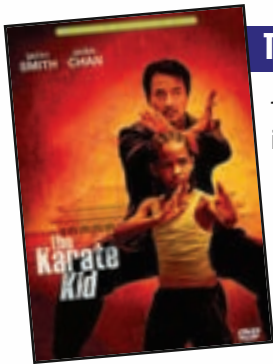
RICKY STEAMBOAT: LIFE STORY OF THE DRAGON (DVD, 15, £29.99) is another career documentary/review on another WWE great.

THE LOVED ONES (18, DVD, £15.99) a horror film starring one of the blokes from the Twiglet films.

KANDAHAR BREAK: FORTRESS OF WAR (15, DVD, £10.99) "With relentless thrills and an action-packed story, Kandahar Break: Fortress of War is a gripping and exhilarating adventure-ride from start to finish." So says the Press release. **THE PACIFIC BATTLESHIP YAMATO (DVD, 15, £15.99)** is an interesting naval tale that comes sans extras.

BLACK CHRISTMAS (DVD, 18, £15.99) is the mother of all slasher movies ... influencing *Scream*, *Halloween* and others.

WWE Corner: Three big WWE releases this month. First up **IRON WILL (DVD, £29.99, 15)** focuses across it's three disks on the Elimination chamber matches that have become a WWE hallmark. Next up **IS MONEY IN THE BANK (DVD, £17.99, 15)** this years new pay per view headlined by two... er... money in the bank matches. **RICKY STEAMBOAT: LIFE STORY OF THE DRAGON (DVD, 15, £29.99)** is another career documentary/review on another WWE great. Finally we have **FATAL FOUR WAY (DVD, £17.99, 15)** featuring this years news PPV event headlined by a series of... oh well you get the point.



The Karate Kid 2010 (PG) *Review by Richard Hawes*

1984's much-loved *The Karate Kid* has already had a handful of sequels, including a rehash that introduced a new, female character that flopped badly. But it's hard to keep a good franchise down and it was really only a matter of time before a new episode was made. What is surprising is just how different this remake is. Rather than a straight imitation of the original and its iconic characters and moments, it's a complete conceptual makeover. Perhaps due to the fact that *Never Back Down* followed the original film's template so closely and unofficially two years ago. In fact it's only called *The Karate Kid* because the title is a recognised and exploitable property. Reworked to appeal to tweens, this time the young hero doesn't relocate from New Jersey to California and learn Karate, but from Detroit to China (!) and learns Kung Fu. Older viewers will find it much harder to connect with Jaden Smith's Dre than with Ralph Macchio's Daniel-san and the overall tone of this overlong film is surprisingly serious; note the hand-held camerawork. But it's hard to resist the perfect casting of Jackie Chan, as the teacher whose methods echo those of Pat Morita's Mr Miyagi. He doesn't do much fighting and the focus is firmly on the occasionally annoying young lead, but his supporting performance is a surprisingly moving one. *The Karate Kid 2010* will feel unfamiliar and alienating to fans of the original series but the next generation will find much to enjoy.

ACTION 3/5 FILM 3/5

If you liked this try *No Retreat, No Surrender, Showdown, The Next Karate Kid*





Brother (DVD, 18) Reviewed By Daniel Gibberd

After his Yakuza clan is wiped out, Yamamoto finds himself marked for death and on the run. Faking his own death, he flees to LA to seek out his half-brother and sets about organising his sibling's motley crew of petty dimebag drug dealers into an elite multi-ethnic mob operating under Yakuza rules. This doesn't sit to well with LA's existing crime families, and thus all-out gang war ensues, leading to the inevitable bloody denouement. The no-nonsense brutality is depicted in a clinically matter-of-fact style, and blackly comedic elements successfully offset the otherwise detached and dispassionate tone of the film. Like most of Kitano's films, it's an acquired taste, but I rather liked it, an intriguing arthouse gangster movie hybrid.

ACTION 3/5 FILM 4/5

You may also like: *Goodfellas, Godfather Trilogy, Battle Royale*



Higanjima - Escape From Vampire Island (DVD, 15 tbc) Reviewed By Matt Duddy

Based on the manga series of the same name, Higanjima focuses on Akira and his school friends who head off to the mysterious aforementioned island in search of Akira's brother who disappeared two years earlier. On arrival at the island they are greeted by a hoard of vampires led by the ancient Miyabi who is intent on firstly experimenting on them before feeding on them. Akira et al are saved by his brother Atsushi who has banded with the surviving inhabitants to rid the island of the vampires once and for all. The film goes off on too many tangents in its attempt to copy every other horror film of recent years. The CGI effects are laughable and the action and acting can only be described as mundane. This is a poorly conceived attempt to cash in on the spate of recent vampire movies and one to avoid.

ACTION 1/5 FILM 2/5

If you liked this, try: *Thirst, The Machine Girl, Blood: The Last Vampire*

COMPETITIONS

This month we have the following titles to give away:

To win a copy of KANDAHAR BREAK: FORTRESS OF WAR all you have to do is answer this very easy question: *Where is KANDAHAR?*

- a) Afghanistan
- b) Iraq
- c) London

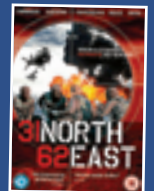
Answers on email to kandahar@martialartsinprint.com



To win a copy of 31 NORTH 62 EAST all you have to do is answer this very easy question: *Who stars in 31 NORTH 62 EAST?*

- a) Craig Fairbrass
- b) Craig Bross
- c) Craig from the chippy

Answers on email to 31n62e@martialartsinprint.com



To win a copy of EVIL DEAD on Blu Ray all you have to do is answer this very easy question: *Who stars in Evil Dead?*

- a) Sam Raimi
- b) Ted Raimi
- c) Bruce Campbell

Answers on email to evildead@martialartsinprint.com



To win a copy of 30 DAYS OF NIGHT DARK DAYS on DVD all you have to do is answer this very easy question: *Which creatures feature in 30 Days Of Night?*

- a) Werewolves
- b) Vampires
- c) Zombies

Answers on email to 30days@martialartsinprint.com



To win a copy of BLACK DEATH on DVD all you have to do is answer this very easy question: *Who stars in Black Death?*

- a) Sean Bean
- b) Mr Bean
- c) Sean Sherk

Answers on email to blackdeath@martialartsinprint.com





Connected (DVD, 15) *Review by Andrew Skeates*

Now Hollywood has been remaking hit Asian films for some years now with such titles as Ring, Dark Water and A Tale of Two Sisters being remade for the American market. Well, Hong Kong has been doing the same thing for years as well: remaking hit Western films for the Eastern market. Everything from The Bodyguard to Leon has been remade and Connected follows suit, itself being a remake of the not-so-well-known but underrated flick Cellular. Based on an original story by Larry Cohen, Cellular was a short and sharp B-movie thriller about a regular joe trying to help a kidnapped woman. Director Benny Chan sticks pretty close to the original, delivering plenty of tension and some decent action thrills. While Cellular was not necessarily crying out for a remake, Connected is still a thrilling interpretation of its story with added Hong Kong style action and another great flick from the always reliable Benny Chan.

ACTION 3.5/5 FILM 3.5/5

If you liked this, try: Cellular, New Police Story, Who Am I?

IMPORT CORNER: Beatdown (2010) *Review by Andrew Skeates*

Run of the mill, low budget fight flick about a bad ass fighter taking part in an underground fighting scene in order to pay off the debts his dead brother left behind to an evil mob boss. Nothing new or exciting in terms of story, Beatdown is nevertheless surprisingly watchable and entertaining thanks to its easy going pace and engaging turns from Rudy Youngblood (finally appearing in another film after the awesome Apocalypto) and the always reliable Danny Trejo. The fights are frequent and refreshingly bone crunching but the makers almost ruin them, and the rest of the film, with ridiculous and unnecessary editing tricks and "enhancements." Other than that, Beatdown isn't half bad and provides some decent, uncomplicated and fight heavy action entertainment.

ACTION 2.5/5 FILM 3/5

If you liked this, try: AWOL, Shootfighter, Gutter King

Beatdown is available on import from all leading DVD importers

