

How many independent, Revolutionary War-era slasher movies are there? I can only think of half a dozen," smiles Philadelphia-based filmmaker Andrew Repasky McElhinney, whose atmospheric, eerie *A Chronicle of Corpses* has played to packed midnight screen-

Margot White, Ryan Foley and Oliver Wyman are determined not to join the *Chronicle of Corpses*.



"A CHRONICLE OF CORPSES" History written in blood

ings in New York City.

While it's admittedly difficult to make a period film on the cheap, McElhinney stresses the larger challenge of breaking down genre requirements: "*Corpses* is a fusion of highbrow and low-brow aesthetics. It's a shame that movies are automatically branded as one thing or another. *The House of Mirth* and *Jeepers Creepers* are both interesting, maybe even great, but the crossover audience is virtually nil."

Corpses takes place on a musty plantation during a long weekend in 1807, as an unseen executioner ritualistically massacres the Elliot family one by one (including a particularly nasty infanticide). The slasher conventions are used as a bitter allegory for what's happening to the Elliot clan: They're being crushed under the wheel of their dwindling place in history. "Their way of life is dead," McElhinney says, "and they don't know where else to go.

These people are haunted by memory—where they are now is a direct result of what happened before they were born. In some ways, the killings occur as a type of wish fulfillment or natural selection."

In discussing inspirations for his sinister parable, McElhinney cites the last days of country club culture in his

home town of Chestnut Hill, PA in the late '80s, linking them to his prep school studies of the French and Indian War and the American Revolution. "What we learned about in class, we were seeing in our own social circles. It's not a stretch to take the fading country-club aristocrats and imagine AIDS as this mad slasher coming after them for their past transgressions. To translate that into a genre film set in 1807 seemed natural—instead of industrialization in the early 1800s, we had the computerization of the early 1990s.

"The subtext of the mid-'80s was reading AIDS as divine payback for aberrant behavior," McElhinney continues. "Now, no one deserves AIDS, but the idea of plague seemed very much in conjunction with the end of that era. That cultural anxiety appears in the *Friday the 13th* films, which might be [viewed as] reactionary pictures that state the mores of their era. Watching the series now overwhelms me with nostalgia. It's a chronicle of a vanished way of life. Who goes to sleep-away camps anymore?"

Amidst the fatalistic march toward death ("It's not called *A Chronicle of Corpses* for nothing," McElhinney quips), a chance for personal redemption is found within the youngest Elliot son, Thomas

(Oliver Wyman). He's initially presented as a frustrated alcoholic whose first instinct is to block out the horror with drink. As the bodies pile up, Thomas nobly attempts to redeem himself before pointedly facing his demise. "When he sees his time is up, he decides to go out in style. There's something romantic about dressing up as a gentleman before going to the guillotine. There's no reason to, it's not expected, but it's a matter of personal dignity and self-acceptance. When it's my time, I hope to go out that way—after I've made another

two dozen movies, of course."

Since *Corpses'* success in New York, McElhinney has received several lucrative financial offers and been invited to present his film at major European festivals. "What really opened doors was a rave review in *The New York Times* the day we opened," McElhinney says. "The notices have been very good. It's incredibly gratifying to see the hard work of the actors and crew acknowledged."

McElhinney is already planning his follow-up feature, the provocatively titled *Flowers of Evil*. Set within the contemporary, sinister industrial wastelands of Philadelphia, the story follows a boy from the country who is lured into the world of a dangerous 16-year-old femme fatale. "He falls madly in love with her, beyond reason. It's the love you only have once, when it's the first time. But nothing lasts forever." McElhinney throws in a teaser for horror fans, indicating that his characters see the latest episode in an imaginary horror franchise (also called *Flowers of Evil*) and, he cryptically intones, "toward the end, they start re-enacting the movie and the boy is able to give her what she desires." Judging from McElhinney's wild flourishes of Gothic morbidity, it won't be happily ever after.

—Jeremiah Kipp

FEARFILMFORECAST

Winter: *Citizen Toxie: The Toxic Avenger IV* (continuing)

February 13: *Wendigo*

Feb. 22: *The Queen of the Damned*

March 8: *The Panic Room*

March 15: *Frailty*

March 22: *Blade 2, No Such Thing* (NY/LA)

March 26: *Arachnid* (direct-to-video)

April 5: *Resident Evil*

April 19: *Scorpion King*

April: *Dagon* (direct-to-video)

Summer: *Halloween: Homecoming, Red Dragon*

July 12: *Reign of Fire*

August 2: *Darkness, Signs*

Aug. 9: *Ring* (remake)

Aug. 30: *Eight Legged Freaks* (formerly *Arac Attack*)

September 27: *Fear.com*

October 11: *Psychic*

Oct.: *Ghost Ship, House of the Dead*

Undated: *Abandon, American Psycho II, Below, Blair Witch 3, Blood Feast 2, Bubba Ho-Tep, Dreamcatcher, Elvira's Haunted Hills, The Gathering, Hellraiser: Hellseeker, House of 1000 Corpses, Jason X, Long Time Dead, One Hour Photo, Piñata, Ricky 6, Spider, They, Trigon: The Legend of Pelgidiom, 28 Days Later, Vampires: Los Muertos*

Note: Most release dates are tentative and subject to change. See www.fangoria.com for updates.



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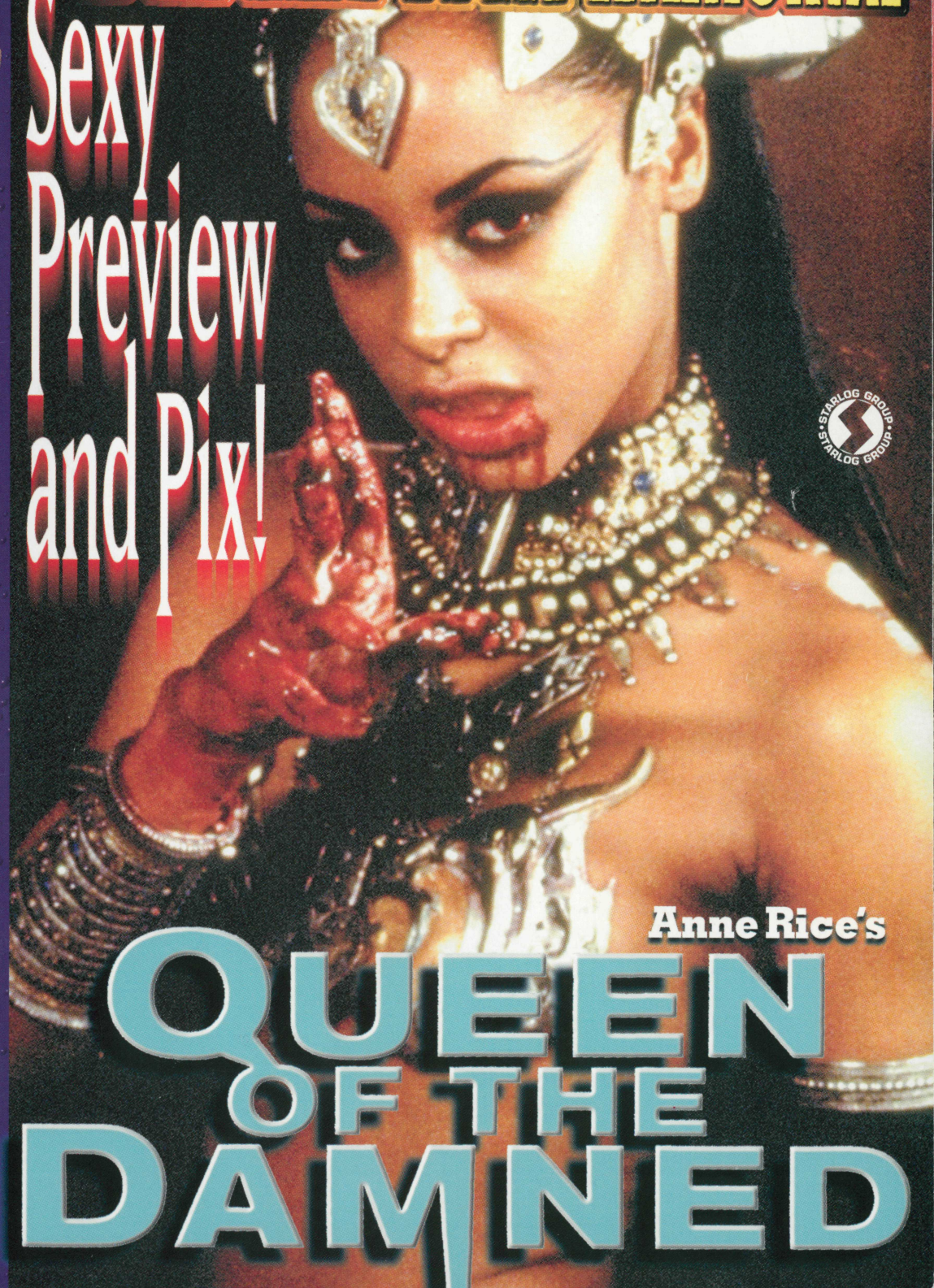
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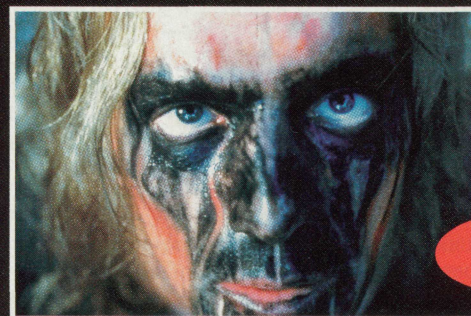


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