Robert Bergman's

A Whisper To A Scream

I usually like thrillers/suspense films, especially if well done. Unfortunately this isn't the case with Robert Bergman's latest entry into the genre, A Whisper To A Scream. This low-budget/low-tech formula piece, "set against the backdrop of an artistic community," is nothing to write home about.

The basic plot revolves around Matt, a Djsound engineer/artist/maniac who murders semi-clad female performing artists who also sideline as sex phone girls at the same club - Whispers. Enter Gabrielle (Nadia Capone), an out-of-work actress who must resort to working as a sex phone girl at the club in order to support herself and her unsuccessful artist-boyfriend Frank. Matt develops an obsession with Gabrielle after inadvertently witnessing her performance in an independent video in, believe it or not, an angel.

Conveniently, Matt also works at the club and begins calling Gabrielle in his quest for the right sequences. She reminds him of the last time he walked through the woods with his brother, he feels that Aaron has disappeared. Running through the trees, he senses a true loss, and the day of payment has arrived. The audience at the Festival seemed to find the movie quite funny (ha-ha, that is), but Martins-Manteiga maintains that it is meant to be a "sweet film." At a cost of just $7,500, it's a miracle that he even attempted a lavish production - and it almost comes off. A terse, good-looking tale, breathing a seamy streetwise atmosphere, and sporting impeccably realized and well-chosen grungy locations in Toronto.

Like a Dream/ The Mario Lanza Story

Mario Lanza (Alfredo Cocozza) (1921-1959) was reported as saying, "Maemo, you doll, you sing like a son of a bitch." His detractors said he only vocalized "loud and soft," with nothing in between, and would go on to just about his weight problems.

These opinions that through the mind as the credits roll, Lanza's voice vibrates and throbs on the track, and the orchestral arrangement swells up as the singer celeses, "You Do Something To Me". Two small boys run and play on the seashore, passing to watch an airplane overhead and a luxury liner sail by. One of the lads represents Lanza as a child in Italy who responds to his mother's call by telling her he is dreaming. His dreams conjure up a fantasy firmly rooted in the MGM musicals of the '40s and '50s. As Mario's voice pours out Puccini's "O Chiaro Mattino, Johnny Mercero's Song of Italy, Rudolf Frang's "Sing Me" - the images and tableaux are a homage to the innocence of the period and the never-never land of the Hollywood studios musical extravaganzas.

This stylishly romantic tribute to Lanza and his era was concocted by first-time filmmaker John Martins-Manteiga, born well after the period. He offers a fanciful, painterly view of the Technicolor visions of the musical silver screen, with Kirk Dunn to the fore, ably acting and lip-synching Mario around Hollywood and also in some recognizable locations in Toronto.

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DEAD MEAT

Olly Dale made up this little drama when she was a Resident at the Canadian Centre for Advanced Film Studies, 1986-89. It's sports a seedy gloss, a mean and gritty atmosphere, and is full of repetitive four-letter-word dialogue reflecting the pitiful inadecacy of its street characters. The film also displays a certain grotesque wit.

A pathetic young druggie owes a loan shark, and the day of payment has arrived. Of course, he doesn't have the money, and tries to explain to his equally downtrodden girlfriend that he will give her the goods, but will have to do "something" to the kid to preserve his dealer's bully-boy reputation.

On a tract of wasteland, the young wimp gets out of The Man's car, and agrees to the front tire being lowered on his hand to leave a mark! The gullible chap is prised on the ground, and then The Man takes a hatchet out of the car trunk... However, fortified with a shot of something, he goes to see The Man, who says he will go away, but will have to do "something" to the kid to preserve his dealer's bully-boy reputation."

THE DARK ISLAND

visals of still water with floating lilies, and city buildings and highway underpasses; the sounds of the country, the noise of a city. A man's voice is heard talking about his younger brother Aaron, and on-screen we see them driving with their mother through the fall colours to the family cottage. They squabble amicably, go canoeing together - and then comes the news of their grandfather's death. This event troubles the adolescent boy, and as he walks through the woods with his brother, he feels that Aaron has disappeared. Running through the trees, he senses a true loss, and the day of payment has arrived.

There's a rousing quality bit when the brother is circling through and around white sheets drying on a clothesline, the kid to preserve his dealer's bully-boy reputation.

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