

**“They don’t call ’em exploitation movies for nothing!”: Joe Bob  
Briggs and the Critical Commentary on *I Spit on Your Grave***

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Film critic Joe Bob Briggs opens his DVD audio commentary for the cult classic rape/vengeance film, *I Spit On Your Grave* (1978), with a simple proposition, “What we’re going to decide here is this the most disgusting movie ever made or is it the most feminist movie ever made (sic)?”<sup>1</sup> Directed by Meir Zarchi, *I Spit On Your Grave* stands as a staple of exploitation cinema, courting considerable controversy in its representation of rape and revenge. With a remake of *I Spit On Your Grave* already in production, following on from a recent wave of 1970s-era horror remakes (*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* (2009) and *The Last House On The Left* (2009) for example), the original *I Spit On Your Grave* deserves reappraisal as a piece of cinema (or a piece of trash).<sup>2</sup> *I Spit On Your Grave* was once despised as a “video nasty,” which we can see in a print review Briggs wrote concerning its VHS release: “This flick is considered ‘the most disgusting movie ever made’ by Ebert the Wimp and Siskel the Simp, who went on TV for two, three years tellin [sic] everybody that it makes men want to rape women, which is why the theaters quit running it.”<sup>3</sup> Released to DVD by Force Entertainment, the controversy over its release both in theatres and on video was used as a marketable element with the cover informing us that *Grave* was “Previously Banned” and still stands as “The Most Controversial Revenge Film Ever Made.” The copy on the back-cover reiterates Briggs’ question over the

film's critical and moral value as something that has to be decided upon by the willing viewer:

Banned for 17 years by the Australian Office of Film and Literature Classification, the original, uncut version of *I Spit On Your Grave* has long been called too ugly, too violent and too terrifying to watch. Others have called it a powerful and superb cinema. Judge For Yourself.<sup>4</sup>

Briggs' commentary frames itself as the final word on *I Spit On Your Grave*, helping the audience decide once and for all which understanding of the film is appropriate. Briggs is as notorious a film critic as *I Spit On Your Grave* is a notorious piece of "trash." Briggs, who describes himself as "King of the Drive-In," is the cowboy alter-ego developed by writer John Bloom, who began writing a column for the *Dallas Times Herald* in 1982 that developed into syndicated reviews of slashers, horror films, action films, and cult cinema in general. Briggs describes his occupation as film critic as a defender of trash, championing films that would be otherwise snubbed by the mainstream press:

When I started reviewing drive-in movies that same year [1980], cult films were despised and ignored by the mainstream press. Frequently I would be the only reviewer of a film, and the distributors were frankly surprised that I was interested in writing about, say, *Dr. Butcher M.D.* or *Cannibal Holocaust*.<sup>5</sup>

Briggs' burgeoning career as a cult film critic coincides with the time period in which *I Spit On Your Grave* was released, similarly despised but not ignored by any means. Carol J. Clover suggests that the performative aspects of Briggs' reviewing style, like his trademark tally of breasts, blood and "fu" (as in kung-fu, but also applied to any piece of action, e.g. "saw-fu"), contains a "lowbrow, campy tone" that allows for a 'necessary distance between the readership and the movie.'<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Briggs has even been called a "faux movie critic" for his over-the-top investment in B-grade cinema.<sup>7</sup> Yet he also stands as a film critic that markets himself within what Jeffrey Sconce calls 'paracinema,' the explicit manifesto of which, as Sconce defines it, is "to valorize all forms of 'cinematic trash,' whether such films have been either explicitly rejected or simply ignored by 'legitimate film culture.'<sup>8</sup> Categorising Briggs as a faux critic or campy in this manner is a similar act of rejection or ignorance from legitimate film culture, which sidelines his comments as a critic because they focus on popular trash like the *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* slashers or *American Ninja* action movies.

While "lowbrow" and "campy" are useful descriptions for Briggs' *I Spit*

*On Your Grave* commentary, the commentary is also marked by a sincere argument for the film's 'feminist' qualities. The distance between audience and movie is closed by Briggs' specific scene readings even as his commentary distances us from the visceral effects of the film's representation of sexual violence. On the question of judgement and how this is shaped by critical commentary, I will analyse Joe Bob Briggs' audio commentary for *I Spit On Your Grave*, which exists as an extra-textual feature on the DVD, but is also a text in its own right. As Deborah Parker and Mark Parker suggest, the relationship between audio commentary and film scene "becomes another text, intimately related to the film, complicating the experience of the film, but nevertheless not quite the film."<sup>9</sup> While Parker and Parker specifically discuss the director's DVD commentary, such as Werner Herzog's commentary for *Fitzcarraldo* (1982), the critic's commentary is more often than not invested in argument, providing a reading that runs alongside the film from the perspective of the educated ideal viewer. The Briggs commentary defends *I Spit On Your Grave* by suggesting that the film is "disgusting" for a reason, which is to present the brutality of rape in a more raw style than Hollywood would have ever dared. Where Briggs differs from other critics such as Carol J. Clover who have defended *Grave* is in his double address of critical evaluation and ironic appreciation. The larger-than-life personality of the paracinema critic stamps the commentary as an entertainment in itself, mocking the flaws of the film even as it argues for the film's clear sense of morality. The result is a commentary that is appropriate to *I Spit On Your Grave*, which as a film is also divided tonally between documentary-realism and exploitation cinema. At the same time, Briggs' sense of humour is laid over the film with his comments, which offer a space for the audience to rethink the film without being assaulted so acutely by its representation of rape and violence. I will begin by summarising the plot of *I Spit On Your Grave* and provide an account of the critical commentary – in reviews, articles and public reactions – that it provoked when it was released into cinemas. Then I will proceed to analyse the Joe Bob Briggs commentary, looking at how it incorporates the original critical reception into its own commentary, and touching upon four aspects of *I Spit On Your Grave* as a paracinema text: (1) the discussion over audience identification and appropriate reaction, (2) the question of humour in the commentary track, (3) the understanding of the film as feminist within Briggs' hyper-masculine tone, and (4) its location within a sub-sub-genre of a cinema, that of the rape/revenge film.

For those who have not seen *I Spit On Your Grave*, the basic story follows a female writer named Jennifer (Camille Keaton) who leaves New York City to live in a Connecticut lake-house near the Housatonic River. In-

tending to work on her novel, Jennifer attracts the attention of four males, one of them mentally challenged, who eventually attack her, rape her repeatedly, and leave her for dead. This onslaught of abuse and degradation comprises the film's first half and the rape itself takes up to twenty-five minutes of screen-time. The remainder follows Jennifer, after she has recovered from her ordeal, enacting vicious revenge on each of her attackers in turn. Zarchi films the grotesque events in a documentary fashion without an accompanying soundtrack, engaging in an aesthetic that is both primitive and stark. Independently produced, the film was originally released into drive-ins throughout 1978 under the title *Day of the Woman*; it was eventually picked up by distributor Jerry Gross who re-released it under the new title of *I Spit On Your Grave*. Director Meir Zarchi makes his displeasure with the commonly known title clear on his own commentary for the DVD: "When they announced the title *I Spit On Your Grave*, I hated it and I still do."<sup>10</sup> One could understand why Zarchi would dislike it since the two titles suggest the two avenues of reception that Briggs has already emphasised – 'the most disgusting movie ever made (*I Spit On Your Grave*) or the most feminist movie ever made (*Day of the Woman*).' With its new title and promotional publicity, *I Spit On Your Grave* became the focus of attention for film critics, generating tremendous controversy and publicity through reviews and comments made about its moral character. "[*I Spit On Your Grave*] is one of those forbidden movies," Briggs quips on the commentary, "I don't know, maybe it's the title?"

I want to discuss further how commentary in all its forms, particularly when it is mediated through reviews and DVD commentaries, works as both a guideline and a measure for appropriate audience reaction, especially for exploitation films such as *I Spit On Your Grave*. Theresa Cronin's article, "Media Effects and the Subjectification of Film Regulation" is important to consider here as she examines how critical taste helps inform what should pass for mainstream, general, and most importantly, "normal" responses to horror films. Audiences tend to be constructed as either "vulnerable" or "deviant" in the cultural concern over the effects violent films have on them:

Both reviewers and commentators regularly discuss these 'deviant' viewers in order to justify their rejection of the film. And in the course of these discussions commentators can be surprisingly specific in the way which they differentiate between 'normal' or 'acceptable' readings and responses and 'abnormal' or 'deviant' ones. The process of classifying readings and responses in terms of their 'normalcy' and 'deviancy', however, does not simply describe observable behaviour. Rather, these arguments actively attempt to deline-

ate appropriate, socially sanctioned readings and response to this 'problematic' film.<sup>11</sup>

What Cronin is arguing is that such reviews and commentaries become inevitably prescriptive, contributing to a social understanding of how we should behave or react to a particular film; what is a "normal" response. She examines how the placement of the Australian horror film *Wolf Creek* (2005) within the "torture porn" sub-genre of contemporary horror has signalled divisions between normal "humane" viewers who reject the physical or sexual violence outright as distasteful, and "sick" viewers who are conceived as 'getting their kicks off' from such horror. Cronin brings in *I Spit On Your Grave* as a forerunner to the critical reaction *Wolf Creek* received, particularly Roger Ebert's reviews of both films where he takes a moral high-ground to both the filmmakers and audiences. The first impression of *I Spit On Your Grave* I ever received from a critic was Ebert's review, written during the 1981 release and reprinted in his collection of bad movie reviews, *I Hated, Hated, Hated This Movie*. While the other bad movie reviews collected in this book offer witty deconstructions of why they are bad, the *I Spit On Your Grave* stands apart with Ebert's horrified Zero Star reaction. He writes, "*I Spit On Your Grave* is sick, reprehensible and contemptible. Attending it was one of the most depressing experiences of my life. This is a film without a shred of artistic distinction."<sup>12</sup> What contributed to Ebert's opinion was the behaviour of the audience with whom he saw the film, who provided their own vocal commentary during the film's rape and revenge scenes. As Cronin writes, Ebert argues that such films, alongside the general trend in slasher films in the early 1980s, would foster a desire in the audience for rape and violence against women, even concluding that the audience around him were nothing more than "vicarious sex criminals."<sup>13</sup> Indeed Briggs quotes Ebert's review throughout the DVD commentary, almost as a primary text of the mainstream outrage and hostility that *I Spit On Your Grave* generated; the view of the film as 'the most disgusting movie ever made.' With his film critic partner, Gene Siskel, Ebert even went so far as to campaign against the movie's release, which Zarchi argues was a "unique phenomenon – they appealed to the public not to see it. Were they successful? Big time!"<sup>14</sup> Ebert is not the only review referenced by Briggs as other critics shared an extreme dislike of Zarchi's film. Mick Martin and Marsha Porter wrote:

An utterly reprehensible motion picture with shockingly misplaced values... This is, beyond a doubt, one of the most tasteless, irresponsible, and disturbing movies ever made. Regardless of how much you enjoy 'bad' films, you will hate yourself for watching this

one.<sup>15</sup>

The negative feeling that *I Spit On Your Grave* inspired continues to exist even now, underscoring its considerable ability to repulse and sicken. For example, Adam Rockoff's book, *Going To Pieces: The Rise and Fall of the Slasher Film, 1978-1986*, intends to critically cover, as well as celebrate, the 'rogue genre' of the slasher film, which itself was under fire from Ebert and Siskel as also being morally reprehensible. When it comes to *I Spit On Your Grave*, Rockoff does not believe it qualifies as a slasher film, even going so far as to write, "In fact, it isn't even a film as much as a series of highly disturbing skits designed to repulse."<sup>16</sup> Rockoff then insinuates that those who seek to validate *I Spit On Your Grave* critically – say, for example, as a feminist movie – are fooling themselves.

After the backlash against the film, some critics, apparently not knowing what to make of it, chose to intellectualize the film as some feminist experiment, notwithstanding the fact that it wallows in the degradation and humiliation of women far more than any slasher.<sup>17</sup>

Once again, a moral standard is appealed to that establishes the appropriate reaction to the film: arguing for it as a "feminist experiment" is an intellectual game rather than seeing *I Spit On Your Grave* for what it is – irredeemable, reprehensible trash that does not even work as a proper film.

Of course, the critical reaction around the release of *I Spit On Your Grave* had greater repercussions when it shifted from the drive-in to videotape, and was targeted within the 1984 Video Recordings Act in the United Kingdom, which banned thirty-seven titles from sale and rental within the country. *I Spit On Your Grave* became one of the notorious "video nasties."<sup>18</sup> There were great concerns over films that combined extreme sex and violence for the moral impact they would have on society, particularly within the medium of home video, which was considered "a seemingly un-surveyable entertainment" that would be viewed by "at risk" sections of the population (poor, uneducated, male adolescents).<sup>19</sup> As Carol J. Clover points out, the critical reaction against *I Spit On Your Grave* was split at this time despite its banning in certain countries, particularly in the UK:

In Britain, commentators bent on censoring *I Spit On Your Grave* (in the 'video nasty' hearings) claimed that it glorified the act of rape and indeed had inspired 'copycat' crimes, whereas commentators bent on defending it claimed that it 'wants us to hate the nature of the act of rape and what it calls forth.'<sup>20</sup>

Print reviews from critics offer a public reaction to any film and alongside the censorship the film received in certain countries, such notoriety also

provided the film with greater publicity. Critical condemnation provided a measure of success for *I Spit On Your Grave* as critic Michael Weldon points out, “Thanks to the PBS *Sneak Previews* show, which labelled it inhumane and sexist, this revenge exploitation feature has gained a new audience of videocassette buyers.”<sup>21</sup> Even Zarchi acknowledges this fact but frames it within a democratic context where, thanks to the popularity of video, the film was placed “in the hands of the public.”<sup>22</sup> With the transfer from VHS to DVD as the home entertainment system of choice, the extra digital space offered room for additional features, which as Graeme Harper argues, has made it ‘equally a medium associated with knowledge acquisition, regardless of its genre.’<sup>23</sup> Knowledge acquisition refers to the retrospection and nostalgia that looking back at the making of a film offers to fans through a mixture of trivia and insight. DVDs incorporate the audio commentary as a supporting feature, offering readings of a text that may or may not influence the viewer’s opinion of the text. The DVD commentary is the central avenue of retrospection for *I Spit On Your Grave* – there are no Making Of Documentaries or Interviews – and in this manner it is also regarded as the central arena for debate on the disc. Zarchi even makes a point of mentioning near the end of his *Grave* commentary that Ebert was given an opportunity to provide his own commentary for the film, but ‘he declined – he could have said anything he wanted.’<sup>24</sup> Thomas Doherty points out that the DVD commentary is basically a monologue, particularly when there is only one participant, resulting in a ‘one-sided relationship’ with the listener-spectator.<sup>25</sup> To this end, Briggs attempts to institute a dialogue with critics of *I Spit On Your Grave* by reading out extracts from their reviews in order to establish a mainstream position that has ‘crucified’ Zarchi’s film, which he can then respond to freely throughout his commentary.

I would like to move onto discussing Joe Bob Briggs’ commentary as a paracinema defence of *I Spit On Your Grave* that creates a context of debate even if in the end it is only a subjective one-person account of the film. Briggs delivers his commentary with equal attention to his roles as film critic, B-movie historian and cult personality. His ‘Good Ole Boy’ cowboy persona is clear in the broad Texan accent we hear in the commentary, alongside the slang he draws upon and his energetic delivery. He establishes a tongue-in-cheek approach in the first five minutes of the commentary as he pronounces the title, “*I Spit... [dramatic pause] On Your Grave*. That’s the way you have to say it to imitate the trailer.” Briggs then reads the original copy from the poster with the repeated error it makes with regards to the film’s body count: “This woman has just cut, chopped broken and burned five men beyond recognition... and no jury in American would convict her!” Pointing out that Jennifer only kills four men in the movie and

does not burn any of them, Briggs adds with glee, "But they don't call 'em exploitation movies for nothing; do they?" These comments demonstrate Briggs' delight in the details and trappings of the exploitation genre; in the way a film like *I Spit On Your Grave* is sold to an audience, emphasising the violence and drama to the point of including unchecked errors on the poster. Briggs' commentary is at times comparable to the "pre-packaged ironic" appreciation of bad movies that *Mystery Science Theater 3000* popularised.<sup>26</sup> He critiques plot holes such as the scene where Jennifer unpacks in her room of the guest-house, opening a drawer and discovering a hand-gun inside, to which he sarcastically remarks, "Don't you hate it when that happens? When the tenant from last year leaves their firearm behind?" In one instance he singles out the most cartoonish performance from actor Richard Pace who plays Matthew, the mentally challenged bespectacled rapist, with the quip, "I like his performance, but he takes thirty seven minutes to cross a room." Even in the climax of the film when Jennifer heaves an axe into the back of one of her assailants, the resulting close-up of the axe cutting into an obviously fake prosthetic is mocked: "That is the most unconvincing special effect in the whole movie. Like they found an orange mattress somewhere!" The use of humour to discuss a B-grade movie has been Briggs' style in his print reviews and has also become a factor in his further DVD commentaries for Elite Entertainment for such films like *Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter* and *The Double-D Avenger*. In these examples, it is interesting to consider how his name contains marquee status in the packaging. The cover of each has Briggs holding up the film's original poster with his presence dominating the frame. Briggs himself states that his approach to DVD commentaries does include ridiculing the movie when warranted, but "the difference between my 'hosting' and most cult movie hosts is that I always celebrate the film. I never use it as a springboard for jokes."<sup>27</sup> Similar to comments during *I Spit On Your Grave*, there is a delight in the imperfections, plot-holes and genre conventions of exploitation cinema in the *Jesse James* commentary. Briggs happily points out during the scene of Dr. Maria Frankenstein's first experiment that she is not actually Frankenstein's daughter but Frankenstein's granddaughter and sings the praises of the actor playing her, Norda Onyx: "[she] is kind of a babe in a frightening Zsa Zsa Gabor kind of way... She's a bitch with a beaker and she's got a Teutonic accent!"<sup>28</sup> A Briggs commentary is part stand-up routine but also part film history, with Briggs' encyclopaedic knowledge of the acting credits, locations, and director. In this instance, William Beaudine is also known by Briggs as 'one-shot Beaudine' as "he never liked to shoot a scene more than once!" To watch *Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter* without Briggs' commentary



and the level of humour and care he brings to a forgettable Z-grade horror western would leave the DVD transfer of the film an incomplete experience. However, when it comes to *I Spit On Your Grave*, Joe Bob Briggs' commentary is not simply an ironic celebration, but a defence of the film's value, as its subject of rape/revenge and its considerable infamy require moments of serious analysis.

The *I Spit On Your Grave* DVD offers two commentaries – one from Briggs and the other from director Zarchi – and comparing them allows us to understand how intention is related to the spectator/listener. Intention is a key interest in DVD commentaries, resting on the idea that the director, producer, writer, actor or critic will help us understand further the underlying meaning of what occurs on-screen. As Parker and Parker write, “By its very nature, the DVD commentary enforces a heightened attention to intricacies of intention as it plays out over the course of the film. Directorial comment returns again and again to questions of intention that are local and technical, and the discussion has an unusual immediacy and density.”<sup>29</sup> We are being taken through the film scene by scene by the director and they can alert us to the technical construction of a shot or expound further on the proposed meaning behind a shot. An innocuous scene in *I Spit On Your Grave* follows Jennifer arriving in her car at her lake-house. She wanders around the forest serenely in her red dress, sees the lake behind the house, and decides to take her dress off to dip into the water. Such a scene could be considered exploitative in its observation of the lead actress exposing herself for the camera, an example of Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze: “A woman performs within the narrative: the gaze of the spectator and that of the male characters in the film are neatly combined without breaking narrative verisimilitude.”<sup>30</sup> When the nude Jennifer wades into the water in long-shot within this gaze, Zarchi describes the scene as if he were reading from the thematic notes in the script:

Exterior. River. Day. At last Jennifer has found the heavenly peace she was seeking. At last she feels free from the confinement and commotion of the big city. She has returned to nature's womb. Awed by the beauty of the place... she eagerly takes her clothes off and goes into the water.

The intention of the scene is related to characterisation, with the natural scenery inspiring the character to be free with her body and to become one with her environment, reiterating a stereotypical equation between femininity and nature. In contrast, Briggs reads the scene thusly in a descriptive manner:

But as we can see as she luxuriates in nature, she's no ordinary

woman. [As Jennifer disrobes] She just can't stand it – she has to get nekkid! Alright! Because who could resist the placid beauty of the Housatonic River? Now look at the way we see her skinny dipping. Now if Meir Zarchi was making a sleaze film, told from the point of view of the leering male gaze, which is what he's been accused of, what would he do right here? He would show every bead of water on her breasts and have her do the back-stroke. Instead what does he do? The longest shots of all long shots in the history of all long shots. She becomes a little microscopic speck in the distance there. To tell you the truth I'm not sure what this shot means. I assume it means that someone is watching her. Either that or he's establishing how tranquil everything is, what a nature girl she is. This was the Seventies, y'know, women going through that 'Free To Be You And Me' thing. People would have been saying what a cool gal she is – no hang ups!

Briggs' argument against the male gaze here is convincing; the three shots Zarchi uses to cover Keaton disrobing include two that are placed behind her in a medium shot, framed by foliage in the foreground, and the last is the 'longest shot of all long shots in the history of all long shots' that Briggs describes. As the scene plays out, we hear Briggs address the intention of Zarchi the filmmaker, arguing from a genre perspective that if it was a sleaze film along the lines of *Emmanuelle* (1974), there would be more emphasis on the nudity itself rather than the scenery. Such an argument is underscored by the colloquial, casual tone Briggs talks in with his Texan pronunciation of naked as "nekkid", and by his conclusion that he has no idea what the shot means, grabbing at different clichéd ideas such as the environmentalist imagery of the 1970s to explain what Zarchi meant with this scene. He observes from a subtle leering vantage point as an atypical male exploitation film fan (the exultation of "alright!" when she disrobes) even as he clearly critiques condescending opinions that cast *I Spit On Your Grave* as the product of a "sleaze merchant."

Considering the immediate reaction that *I Spit On Your Grave* received on release, it is not the intention of the director that is the issue but how an audience may respond to what is represented and what is considered an appropriate reaction to the representation of sexual violence. Briggs' jocular treatment of the film brings us to the question of humour as an appropriate or inappropriate response, which is where the filmmaker's intention is overshadowed by the reactions of the audience. Ebert's review of *I Spit On Your Grave* included the commentary from the cinema audience as a measure of the film's sickness:

How did the audience react to all of this? Those who were vocal seemed to be eating it up. The middle-aged, white-haired man two seats down from me, for example, talked aloud. After the first rape: 'That was a good one!' After the second: 'That'll show her!' After the third: 'I've seen some good ones, but this is the best'... In several scenes, the other three men tried to force the retarded man to attack the girl. This inspired a lot of laughter and encouragement from the audience.<sup>31</sup>

Enjoyment and celebration of a particular type, whether through vocal cheering or laughter, is regarded as thoroughly inappropriate to what the film deals with. Even Zarchi himself responds to critics who disliked the film and found it too disturbing to sit through, "What did they expect a film about rape to be? Enjoyable to watch?" Even if we were to give Zarchi the benefit of the doubt and understand his film as intentionally unnerving, Ebert's review demonstrates that not all viewers will see it as the filmmaker intends. Cronin comments on this issue of how one is to appropriately react to disturbing films of this nature:

The issue of laughter arises quite regularly, with both defenders and detractors agreeing that laughter would be completely inappropriate, while feeling physically ill and emotionally disturbed is, on the whole, defined as the way a viewer 'should' or 'ought' to feel. But where for some this reaction is read as an indication that the viewer is appropriately aligned with the ideological thrust of the film (i.e. that one is 'appropriately' disgusted by scenes of sexual violence), for others, like Ebert, this feeling of revulsion is more appropriately directed toward a rejection of the film as a whole.<sup>32</sup>

Cronin argues for a clear distinction between audiences feeling appropriately repulsed as the filmmaker intended, and audiences feeling the film to be inappropriate and indecent for wanting to repulse the viewer in such a manner. In this latter view both the intention of the filmmaker and the success of achieving its aims are considered morally dubious. Briggs responds to Ebert's review, specifically the report of males shouting encouraging remarks during the rape scenes, with: "Well, guys yell all kinds of stuff at the screen to make it seem like the scene is not affecting them, you know. If they were yelling it was probably because the scene was too dang intense!" Vocal reaction in this manner is not considered validation of sincere audience reaction; Briggs frames the comments that appear to encourage rape as macho bluster hiding actual displeasure at the rape. Yet I now want to show how Briggs himself also offers appropriate reactions of revulsion, which are arguably ideologically elicited by Zarchi in a manner that vali-

dates the moral substance and critical worth of *I Spit on Your Grave* as a film.

To be clear, despite Briggs' entertaining candour throughout the commentary, he does not make any jokes or disrespectful comments about the actual rape in the film; he takes it quite seriously, analysing the shots to argue against claims that the film was sleazy or exploitative. When Jennifer is chased into the woods by the four men, slapped down, stripped of her clothes and held down for Matthew, the mentally challenged member, to rape, Briggs defends the intention of the film avidly, "There is nothing erotic AT ALL about this, so it's hard to understand the Siskel and Ebert comments. They CRUSADED against this film!" Briggs points both to Zarchi's use of perspective, which sides with Jennifer in close-ups of her agonised face, and to Camille Keaton's performance, which expresses her pain convincingly, as signs that the movie is not seeking any illicit thrills from this rape: "She's still screaming for help, still not accepting it. I think that this is what makes it scarier." Briggs' reading is one that is supported by Carol J. Clover with her analysis of *I Spit On Your Grave* in her book, *Men, Women and Chainsaws*: "The claim that *Spit* shows the woman enjoying the rape is flatly dishonest; not for a moment does she express anything but protest, fear and pain."<sup>33</sup> At several points during the commentary Briggs' own argument echoes Clover's concerning the film's value in its depiction of rape in a graphically realistic manner. When Johnny, the alpha-male leader, tired of waiting for Matthew to comply with their "offering" disrobes and forces himself on Jennifer, Briggs vocalises his own displeasure: "Oh god," he sighs. Offering the "unusual immediacy" that Parker and Parker have characterised as marking DVD commentaries, such comments from Briggs help distinguish him from the 'inappropriate' audience members that Ebert witnessed viewing *I Spit On Your Grave* by actually articulating his displeasure at the rape scene. Reacting to the action in a specific scene, Briggs demonstrates that the film still has the power to disturb despite his obvious familiarity with it:

This scene was cited as an example of... the audience takes the side of the rapists against Jennifer. I JUST DON'T BELIEVE THAT. We see his face in close-up and we see hers in medium close-up and it is not a pretty sight. And if you wanted to make this erotic, which it would be damn hard to make erotic, the first thing you would do is not make her so dirty and bloody, and the second thing you would show her body and not this ugly guy's bu-tocks [sic] on top of her body. I don't think there's any question of SYMPATHISING WITH THE GANG RAPERs right here!

Briggs bases his argument on the genre conventions that Zarchi would have employed if wanting to represent the rape as a sexually titillating subject. The master shot places the four men holding Jennifer down and she is obscured in the grass; they are all placed within the centre of the frame while the edges of the forest surround them. The point of view shots shift from a high angle on Jennifer's close-up as she looks up helplessly while Johnny's close-up is shot from a low angle as he bears down on Jennifer. Without a score, we are only left with Jennifer's pleas and Johnny's grunting. Yet Rockoff has criticised the representation, not for past accusations of eroticism, but for the extended time spent on Jennifer's violation:

Of course, the argument can be and has been made that by its sheer nature, [*I Spit On Your Grave*] is a severe indictment of rape and the objectification of women. But if this is truly the case, what is the point of spending so much time lingering on the graphic details of the assault?<sup>34</sup>

This returns us to Cronin's point about what is appropriate with regards to the intentions of the filmmaker: for Rockoff, spending this much time on such an ugly subject implies exploitation because it is uncomfortable and unnecessary. Rockoff's question is answered in Briggs' argument, which situates Zarchi's intentions as a director within a paracinema position by claiming that exploitation cinema is more honest, direct, and confrontational than mainstream cinema: "Usually when they film rapes for the movies, they usually cut away from the rape. Hollywood doesn't have any problem with murder but they do have a problem with rape... Meir Zarchi was being brave here, saying 'Okay, you turkeys, here's what rape actually looks like.'" Such sustained interest is appropriate as it does not offer the relief or comfort that mainstream movies would provide. Briggs also refers to Zarchi's reason for wanting to make *I Spit On Your Grave*: during 1974, in Jamaica Hills, Zarchi, his daughter Tammi and a good friend Alex were returning from a jog on a Saturday afternoon when they discovered a young nude woman in a New York City park who had been attacked, raped, and left for dead. This story is given more scope and more pathos in Zarchi's commentary, particularly when he says that this was the driving force behind the movie: "She was a young woman, around eighteen or nineteen, totally naked, a walking corpse covered in mud and blood. She was still in shock and struggled to talk through her broken jaw." Interestingly, Zarchi's story is told to us over the third gang-rape of Jennifer, merging the visual abuse with the audio details of this real life case. The abuse of Jennifer's real life counterpart from her attackers and the uncaring treatment she was given by the police provide some sense of legitimacy for the forceful repre-

sentation of the rape in the film. As Briggs points out, Zarchi is just as interested in the aftermath, following the nude and violated Jennifer crawl away slowly from each encounter: “He [the director] doesn’t sugar-coat it... he wants you to see all of it. He wants you to see she can’t even walk anymore. She’s crippled.” While one could doubt the legitimacy of Zarchi’s story, on the surface it provides evidence for the sincerity of his intentions in making *I Spit On Your Grave* and it is a point that Briggs wholeheartedly believes in during his own commentary. Briggs helps offer an appropriate reaction by mainstream standards to what is transpiring on screen when we hear the bravado in his fluster at the extreme sexual violence against the character of Jennifer.

Where the commentary track differs from the printed critical commentary, whether it is a film critic’s review or an academic’s paper, is in how it can replicate the actual experience of watching a film. Briggs digresses continually, such as before the second gang-rape where the gang force Jennifer down onto a rock while one, we are lead to assume, anally penetrates her. As the men grab her, Briggs cracks wise about the careers of the male actors:

I think you can see why this movie was a resume killer. None of these four actors ever worked again... I guess when you are going to casting calls in New York and your audition reel reads ‘Rape Number One’ and ‘Rape Number Two’, you’re not going to get that guest-spot on *The Cosby Show*.

The tendency to make such glib comments could be held as a variation of Briggs’ point about the need by audience members to “yell all kinds of stuff at the screen to prove it’s not affecting them.” There is a relief in listening to Briggs talk over the movie, filling in the silence provided by the absence of score and dispersing our attention away from the intense events onscreen to consider such comic ruminations. As Jennifer screams during the second rape, Briggs espouses the film’s disturbing power, but this time intertextually references the conventions of exploitation cinema. Briggs’ hardened status as an experienced viewer of exploitation movies and paracinema films, which he refers to constantly, also helps to emphasise *Grave*’s chilling effects:

This is one of the most blood-curdling screams I’ve ever heard and I’ve heard them all. It’s the scream that sells this scene... This scream may be better than Marilyn Burns in the dinner table sequence from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*... [With reference to the rape] Is it over? God, that scream still gets to me! That scream still gives me the willies!

The way that Briggs signals his own discomfort as an audience member consolidates appropriate viewer response even as he also comments on the visceral impact as one of the film's major strengths. The battered, bruised, and nude Jennifer struggles through the woods where she has been abandoned, walking to the house in a protracted sequence that underlines her weakness and injuries. Crawling on the carpet inside the house, Zarchi springs another surprise when Paul stomps on the phone and it is revealed the quartet of men are also inside, awaiting her return. The third gang-rape involves the retarded Matthew finally submitting to both peer pressure and his own desires, beginning to rape her before halting on account of impotence. When Stanley is about to proceed with his turn at rape, Jennifer finally speaks, begging him not to as she's "hurt." While she offers to pleasure him with her hand or mouth, Stanley's mounting frustration develops as he holds a bottle of wine close to her body. Briggs' commentary bespeaks his dread of what happens next: "Of course we've seen enough close-ups of that bottle that we know it's going to end up..." We hear Briggs sighing deeply, as if wanting the moment to be over, and when Stanley rams the bottle into her off-screen, Briggs reacts loudly, "Woah! Still gets to me!" Despite the hyper-masculine swagger to Briggs' voice, his commentary offers moments of dismay that are appropriate reactions to the sexual violence taking place onscreen, even as he shifts the argument away from whether such a trauma should be depicted this relentlessly.

With the second half of *I Spit On Your Grave* devoted to the "revenge" part of the "rape/revenge" genre, Briggs relaxes for the most part with its genre familiarity. Demonstrating once again his qualities as "King of the Drive In," Briggs situates *I Spit On Your Grave* with reference to other cult rape/revenge movies such as Bo Arne Vibenius' *Thriller; A Cruel Picture* (1974) and Abel Ferrera's *Ms. 45* (1981), which also follow female protagonists who have been sexually brutalised and thus seek violent vengeance. He argues that Zarchi's film is told from Jennifer's point of view so that there is no sense of sharing the rapist's pleasure, particularly during the last of the grisly rapes; as Briggs remarks, "I don't think this scene makes you think of anything except 'Castrate those guys immediately!'" Interestingly, it is here that the argument for *I Spit On Your Grave* as a feminist text becomes heard most strongly, as it is situated in contrast to both mainstream revenge movies and mainstream movies that deal with the issue of rape. With regards to mainstream revenge movies, Briggs positions the brutality on display in the third rape scene – particularly the moment where one of the men reads mockingly from Jennifer's manuscript before ripping it up – as the director really setting us up for the second half of the movie:

[Zarchi is] building up so many points against these guys that no-

body wants to see them live. That's the same principle as *Death Wish* or *Dirty Harry*. You have to show how evil these guys are so you want to see them destroyed. The difference is that *Death Wish* and *Dirty Harry* were mainstream movies that looked at revenge from the male point of view. Whereas this film shows it from the female point of view.

*I Spit On Your Grave* is contrasted against mainstream male-based visions of brutalisation and violent recommendation, implying that part of the reason this film was so derided was because it took the female point of view, casting Jennifer as a feminist heroine. During the third gang-rape, Briggs also brings up Jonathan Kaplan's film *The Accused* (1988), where Jodie Foster won an Academy Award for portraying the true case of a gang-rape victim in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Striking another blow for paracinema, Briggs compares the two films in terms of their visceral impact, unsurprisingly finding the mainstream take on gang-rape fundamentally lacking:

Everyone talked how intense the rape scene was [in *The Accused*] and how brave it was to show it in all its brutality. It has nothing on this scene! I think what gets to you is she's still fighting, still struggling... She's about as far from the passive rape victim as you can get.

While at times there is a competitive account implied here over which rape scene is the most brutal, the contrast is struck by Briggs because *The Accused* received mainstream recognition while *I Spit On Your Grave* was denigrated completely for its treatment of the issue. The safe film was celebrated by the masses while the raw version of the same basic story was "crucified." Clover first made the comparison between *I Spit On Your Grave* and *The Accused*:

Although *The Accused* may at first glance seem a world apart from *I Spit On Your Grave*, the two films are, in fact, high and low (and pretty and ugly) versions of one and the same story... take away *The Accused's* elaborate displacement machinery – its legal, psychological, ethical and social ruminations – and relocate it beyond the reach of the law ('out there where no one can hear you scream') and you have *I Spit On Your Grave*: the story of a gang-raped woman hell-bent on revenge. One cannot quarrel with civilization, but it is sometimes useful to look past its comforts to see the stories we tell ourselves, as a culture, for what they really are.<sup>35</sup>

The legal system that is relied upon for justice to prevail in *The Ac-*



*cused* is not present in *I Spit On Your Grave*. The markers of civilization in this manner – police, lawyers, judges, and so forth – are nowhere to be seen and Zarchi sets up the story as very primal in its simplicity. Having been left for dead, Jennifer slowly heals and reclaims her sense of self in a quiet montage of images: bruised and bandaged in bed, alone on the lakeshore, rewriting her manuscript, and finally heading to a church to pray for forgiveness. Briggs, like Clover, points out that the legal system “barely works” in *The Accused* on account of a last minute witness who comes forward. In the arena of exploitation cinema, the issue is much simpler: Jennifer sets her sights on dispatching her four assailants one by one. Both Briggs and Clover also view this stripped down story devoid of legal complication or character interiority as comparable to a classic fairytale. Clover compares it to *Little Red Riding Hood*: “multiply and humanise the wolf, read ‘rape’ for ‘eat’, skip the woodsman (let Red save herself) and you have *I Spit On Your Grave*.”<sup>36</sup> Or as Briggs puts it: “Jennifer doesn’t need any goddanged woodsman!” Without referencing Clover specifically (she is thanked at the end of Zarchi’s commentary for her critical support), it is interesting to see that a number of her key ideas are reiterated by Briggs in his defence of the film.

At the heart of Briggs’ argument for *I Spit On Your Grave* being “the most feminist movie ever made” is its portrayal of Jennifer’s revenge on the quartet of white trash hicks, which is constantly described in relation to the revenge movie tradition in exploitation cinema. With the lack of due process and legal recourse provided in the film, most critics like Ebert have derided the revenge section of the film as being equally “grotesque” as the time spent on the gang-rapes:

... the girl lures one of the men out to her house, pretends to seduce him, and hangs him. She lures out another man and castrates him, leaving him to bleed to death in a bathtub. She kills the third man with an ax and disembowels the fourth with an outboard engine. End of movie.<sup>37</sup>

Again, what really disturbs Ebert is the – to his mind – inappropriate reaction that is inspired in the audience, the vocal pleasure in Jennifer’s revenge, as a woman is heard to shout in the back row, “Cut him up, sister!”<sup>38</sup> To Briggs’ mind, such reaction is proof that the film is a feminist movie, and he comments that the hanging of Matthew, the mildly retarded member of the gang, received cheers when played in cinemas, “which pretty much destroys Roger Ebert’s contention that the audience will side with the rapists.” While Matthew passes for comic relief in the movie, he is also positioned in some ways as the most sympathetic of the male offend-

ers, continually resistant to the idea of raping Jennifer and merely a product of the gang's peer pressure (the pretext of the rape is that it is the gang's offering to Matthew the virgin). Even Clover makes a point of this scene, "For the viewers I have spoken with, the murder of Matthew is the film's most disturbing moment, for he is so clearly drawn as the others' victim. But *I Spit On Your Grave* gives no points for hesitation or reluctance or action under pressure."<sup>39</sup> Of course, Jennifer lures Matthew (who works as an errand boy for the local store) by ordering groceries to be delivered to her house. We see Matthew take a large butcher's knife with him to either defend himself or to kill her outright (after the last rape, he was ordered to kill her by the rest of the gang, which he obviously failed to do). It is here that Jennifer appears in one of the more eroticised shots, wearing a see-through white slip and coyly leading him through the forest. Of course, this is all a pretext for her plan to let him have sex with her while she ties a noose around his neck and eventually hangs him up until he is dead. As Briggs describes, "She only wants him to die at the moment of climax. That's how kinky this woman is. This will be his first orgasm and his last. She will take his virginity at the same time she takes his life." While Clover vocalises some discomfort in this disturbing punishment, Briggs answers the issue again in terms of genre familiarity: 'Does he deserve to die? It's called diminished capacity. But if you're thinking you should get a free ride, you've forgotten the first rule of all rape/revenge movies: all men must die. They're guilty because they're male.' With regards to notions of gender, such genre thinking could be argued as being reductive. Briggs argues an extreme, clichéd feminist idea – all men are evil – which his amplified masculinity is happy to agree with, particularly when it stands as a rule of the rape/revenge genre.

The point is made again with regards to the most notorious act of revenge that Jennifer takes on Johnny, the leader of the gang, who she seduces and castrates with a kitchen knife whilst nude in her bathtub. Briggs regards this as "the most famous scene in exploitation history!" However, he also quotes Martin and Power's review of the film during the lead-up to the moment: "The scene where she robs a man of his offending weapon is one of the most appalling moments in cinema history."<sup>40</sup> Comparing these quotes, we can see the binary that paracinema establishes in its definition: what a mainstream critic will find utterly appalling can be considered celebratory within paracinema, privileging those films that demonstrate "an aesthetic of excess."<sup>41</sup> With regards to academic writing on the scene in question, Clover positions it as a corrective to the long-standing tradition of violence towards women: "The shower scene in *Psycho* is probably the most echoed scene in all of film history. The bathtub scene in *I Spit On Your*

*Grave...* is to my knowledge the only effort to reverse the terms.<sup>42</sup> The vulnerability of bathing, of being exposed physically to the penetration of a knife, is present in both *Psycho* and *I Spit On Your Grave*, yes, but there is a clear difference within the dynamics of each scene. Despite the extreme brutality that Johnny and his friends have put Jennifer through, his character submits to her seduction under the sexist belief that she really liked it (Briggs quips, “The first rule of horror movies [is] women who want to have sex with you will always want to kill you.”) Johnny laughs derisively as Jennifer explains how she has murdered Matthew, believing it to be a bad joke whilst lost in growing ecstasy as she strokes his penis off-screen in the bathtub water. With Johnny’s eyes closed, Zarchi cuts to a close-up of a folded towel on the bathroom floor and to Jennifer picking up a sharp knife with her free hand. Zarchi draws out the tension and conveys the moment in quick details: a sudden flick of Jennifer’s hand, Johnny mistaking the pain for pleasure, the bloody knife being thrown into a sink, and Johnny finally grasping the horror of his situation, screaming “What have you done to me?” As blood pumps profusely from his crotch, Jennifer walks out and locks the door behind her, letting him bleed to death. Viewing the scene with the Briggs commentary, his voice betrays giddy anxiety to the disturbing quality of the scene:

[When Jennifer picks up the knife] This already hurts... Knife close to penis: pretty much the ultimate male nightmare. [When Jennifer castrates Johnny] Ooh, still gets to me! [As blood pumps from Johnny’s body] Oh my god! A little too graphic at this point for me.

The clear discomfort is obviously equated to the gender position of Briggs as a man, understanding the scene as “the ultimate male nightmare” and thusly also describing it as “a feminist tract.” Despite alluding to the terrifying dimensions of the moment, Briggs’ investment in appreciating exploitation cinema also allows for a sort of perverse pleasure in the histrionics of the moment, particularly Eron Tabor’s acting as Johnny – “What a performance! How do you rehearse for something like that?” The question posed at the beginning of the commentary – whether *I Spit On Your Grave* is the most disgusting movie ever made or the most feminist movie ever made – is here answered firmly by Briggs in favour of the latter. In his view, the film’s climactic image embodies female empowerment, with a bikini-clad Jennifer piloting the men’s speedboat (noted continuously by Briggs for the phallic associations of the prow), and bearing down on the last two rapists with an axe as they struggle helplessly in the water. She heaves the axe into the back of one and disembowels the other with the outboard motor, but not before telling him (as he told her trying the third assault) to “suck it.”

Briggs identifies the clear gender reversal happening in these final scenes of the movie: “She calls him a woman, which is interesting because what she’s done is she’s become male and these guys have become men without tools.” In the parameters of exploitation cinema, the issues are simply resolved: all men are scum and women are empowered with subjectivity by the use of the phallic instruments. While empowering to a certain degree, Jennifer’s representation does not escape stereotypical ideas of the female gender as conceptualised by Mulvey: “Woman’s desire is subjected to her image as bearer of the bleeding wound, she can only exist in relation to castration and cannot transcend it.”<sup>43</sup> Indeed, Briggs at one point characterises Jennifer in male action hero terms – “This is her Charles Bronson moment.” *I Spit On Your Grave* can only be feminist by being disgusting: I would agree that the extended brutality Jennifer suffers is not eroticised at all, but it also serves to usher in narrative pleasure within the grisly punishment the miscreant males receive by Jennifer’s hand.

While the role of the critic presumes a level of objectivity with regards to personal taste, Briggs’ role as a Drive-In Movie Critic positions him as having a taste for the distasteful. Joe Bob Briggs’ commentary for *I Spit On Your Grave* advocates a paracinematic “reading protocol” that both engages it seriously as a film and embraces it wholeheartedly as trash. Defending the film against a reputation that has damaged and popularised it for the wrong reasons, Briggs argues that there is a purpose behind the technical mistakes and the moral provocations: to present the brutality of rape unflinchingly and evoking the cathartic charge of female-orientated revenge on “stupid men.” As a larger-than-life personality, Briggs also casts the film-with-commentary as an entertainment in its own right, mocking its flaws at the same time as he delights in them. Of the scene where Johnny allows himself to be seduced by Jennifer after she has held a gun on him and forced him to beg for his life, Briggs remarks, “I don’t know if it’s believable, but it makes for a good movie!” The DVD commentary track offers further critical engagement with cinema, but allows the critic to perform as audience member, directing their argument to specific scenes, and, most importantly in the case of Briggs, signal genuine reactions to the disturbing power of *I Spit On Your Grave*. The commentary track thus offers another avenue for critics to demarcate appropriate or inappropriate engagement with regards to exploitation films, rape/revenge genre films, and paracinema in general. Whether it is appropriate to demonstrate enjoyment and pleasure in such a reviled piece of trash is contested by Briggs, who offers both ironic detachment from and enthusiastic engagement with Zarchi’s film; he cracks wise at the flaws and plot-holes in such a low-budget production and film, yet praises it sincerely for the simplicity of the story and

the primal way that it is told. Critics like Ebert, who have admonished (in print) the “inappropriate” behaviour of audience members that engage enthusiastically with such a film, consider the rawness of the film’s subject matter and style fundamentally objectionable. However, Briggs’ treatment of *I Spit On Your Grave* as both critic and film viewer highlights the complex engagement an audience can have with paracinema. The rape scenes are unpleasant and disturbing to watch, represented in a grotesque “realism” that Hollywood would not dare depict. Yet the focus on such sexual violence also serves to place the audience on Jennifer’s side so that one perversely applauds the vicious scenes of “feminist” revenge, satisfying the conventions and clichés of this particular sub-genre (the protagonist must be victimised in order to gain vengeance). Briggs’ commentary recognises that *I Spit On Your Grave* is on one level just a movie, a film that works within a recognisable genre whose rules we have known since childhood (the comparisons to *Little Red Riding Hood*). However, Briggs argues that it is also more than a movie by considering it as a statement of the complexities that such cinematic “trash” can actually offer to audiences. While the commercial dimensions of exploitation cinema may have compounded the controversial reception of *I Spit On Your Grave* for its economic benefit, the DVD release softens its status as a ‘Video Nasty’ by offering it as a critically debatable piece of film. To this end, the cult status of Briggs himself also markets the film with his willingness to defend the seemingly indefensible through the extra-textual commentary of DVD commentary.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Joe Bob Briggs, commentary, *I Spit On Your Grave* DVD. Directed by Meir Zarchi (Force Entertainment, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Michael Fleming, “Cinetel Set For ‘Grave’ Remake,” *Variety.com*, (3 June 2008), date of access: 10 November 2009 <<http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117986830.html?categoryid=2430&cs=1>>.

<sup>3</sup> Joe Bob Briggs, *Joe Bob Briggs Goes Back To The Drive-In*, (New York: Delacorte, 1990) 191.

<sup>4</sup> Force Entertainment, *I Spit On Your Grave* (DVD), (Australia: Force Entertainment, 2004, back cover).

<sup>5</sup> Joe Bob Briggs, “Cult Cinema: A Critical Symposium”, *Cineaste*, 34:1, (Winter

- 2008), 43.
- <sup>6</sup> Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in Modern Horror Film*, (London: BFI Publishing, 1992) 21.
- <sup>7</sup> David Russell, "I'm Not Gonna Hurt You': Legal Penetrations in *Thelma and Louise*", *Americana: The Journal of American Popular Culture*, 1:1 (Spring 2002), date of access: 5 October 2009 <[http://www.americanpopularculture.com/journal/articles/spring\\_2002/russell.htm](http://www.americanpopularculture.com/journal/articles/spring_2002/russell.htm)>
- <sup>8</sup> Jeffrey Sconce, "'Trashing' the academy: taste, excess, and an emerging politics of cinematic style" in *Screen*, 36:4 (Winter 1995) 372.
- <sup>9</sup> Deborah Parker and Mark Parker, "Directors and DVD Commentary: The Specifics of Intention", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 62:1 (Winter 2004) 13.
- <sup>10</sup> Meir Zarchi, commentary, *I Spit On Your Grave* DVD. Directed by Meir Zarchi (Force Entertainment, 2004).
- <sup>11</sup> Theresa Cronin, "Media Effects and the Subjectification of Film Regulation", *The Velvet Light Trap*, 63, (Spring 2009) 9.
- <sup>12</sup> Roger Ebert, *I Hated, Hated, Hated This Movie*, (Kansas City: Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2000), 178.
- <sup>13</sup> Cronin, "Media Effects" 14.
- <sup>14</sup> Zarchi, Commentary.
- <sup>15</sup> Mick Martin and Marsha Porter, *Video Movie Guide: 1987*, (New York: Ballantine, 1986), 704.
- <sup>16</sup> Adam Rockoff, *Going to Pieces: The Rise and Fall of the Slasher Film, 1978-1986*, (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland and Company, Inc. Publishers, 2002) 64.
- <sup>17</sup> Rockoff, *Going to Pieces* 64-5.
- <sup>18</sup> Other video nasties include Lucio Fulchi's *The Beyond* (1981), Ruggero Deodato's *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980), Abel Ferrara's *Driller Killer* (1979), Sam Riami's *The Evil Dead* (1982), Wes Craven's *The Last House on the Left* (1972) and Dario Argento's *Tenebrae* (1982). Alongside *I Spit On Your Grave*, many of the video nasties are no longer blacklisted and are freely available for rental and purchase on DVD.
- <sup>19</sup> Kay Dickinson, "Troubling Synthesis: The Horrific Sights and Incompatible Sounds of Video Nasties", *Sleaze Artists: Cinema at the Margins of Taste, Style and Politics*, ed. Jeffrey Sconce (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007) 182.
- <sup>20</sup> Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws* 116.
- <sup>21</sup> Michael Weldon, *The Psychotronic Encyclopedia of Film*, (New York: Ballantine, 1983) 354.
- <sup>22</sup> Zarchi, Commentary.
- <sup>23</sup> Graeme Harper "DVD & the New Cinema of Complexity", *New Punk Cinema*, ed. Nicholas Combes, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 97.
- <sup>24</sup> Zarchi, Commentary.

- <sup>25</sup> Thomas Doherty, "DVD Commentary Tracks: Listening to the Auteurs", *Cineaste*, 26:4, (Fall 2001) 78.
- <sup>26</sup> Jeffrey Sconce, "Introduction", *Sleaze Artists: Cinema at the Margins of Taste, Style and Politics*, ed. Jeffrey Sconce, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007) 4.
- <sup>27</sup> Joe Bob Briggs quoted in Scott Lecter, "At The Drive-In: An Interview With Joe Bob Briggs", *DVD Talk*, 2007, date of access: 9 November 2009 <[http://www.dvdtalk.com/interviews/at\\_the\\_drivein.html](http://www.dvdtalk.com/interviews/at_the_drivein.html)>.
- <sup>28</sup> Joe Bob Briggs, commentary, *Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter* DVD (Elite Entertainment, 2005).
- <sup>29</sup> Parker and Parker, "Directors and DVD Commentary" 20.
- <sup>30</sup> Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader*, ed. Screen (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 27.
- <sup>31</sup> Roger Ebert, *I Hated, Hated, Hated This Movie* 179.
- <sup>32</sup> Cronin, "Media Effects" 15.
- <sup>33</sup> Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws* 118.
- <sup>34</sup> Rockoff, *Going to Pieces* 64.
- <sup>35</sup> Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws* 151.
- <sup>36</sup> Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws* 124.
- <sup>37</sup> Ebert, *I Hate, Hate, Hate This Movie* 179.
- <sup>38</sup> Ebert, *I Hate, Hate, Hate This Movie* 179.
- <sup>39</sup> Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws* 123.
- <sup>40</sup> Martin and Porter, *Video Movie Guide* 704.
- <sup>41</sup> Sconce, "'Trashing' the Academy" 380.
- <sup>42</sup> Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws* 118.
- <sup>43</sup> Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" 25.