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# KITCHEN SINK CREEPS

## WEEK 10.

*Bull* (2021)

Paul Andrew Williams

The nonlinear, almost Nicolas Roeg quality of the Paul Andrew Williams feature *Bull*, creates an oddly unsettling fragmented narrative that eventually delivers a devastating final twist. It's a checkerboard illusion where the past meets the present in a sadistic anti-cathedral of carnage and revelation.

Cut from the same cloth as other home-grown psychological crime horrors such as Ben Wheatley's *Kill List* (2011) and Gareth Tunley's *Ghoul* (2016), the film riffs on similar 'bad lad returns to wreak violent revenge' outings such as the decidedly grim kitchen sink slasher *Dead Man's Shoes* (2004).

And yet, Williams delivers something, which not only transcends the more clichéd tropes of the usual British gangster flick but also manages to out-brutalise even the more extreme entries in this popular sub-genre.

And yet this explicit violence is often complemented by a moody, understated presentation, where quiet or empty space is expertly used to create a suffocating and mysteriously agonising tension of unearthly design.

For as much as Williams neatly captures that murky and seedy underbelly of small-town criminality, utilising his expertise to capture this bleeding mess of underground sub-culture, he also offers one of the most disquieting and shocking takes on the 21st-century supernatural thriller we've seen so far.

Because the black heart of this excellent movie owes as much to *Halloween* (1978) as it does to *The Long Good Friday* (1980) but while Carpenter's ghoul hid behind the rubber disguise of a William Shatner fright-mask, *Bull* offers the kind of nightmare that also comes wrapped in the guise of Ken Loach style social realism.

This is criminality at its seediest worst, Williams foregoes any attempt to make these people come across as charismatic, they are simply presented as unmistakably human and all that that entails.

The 'success' of the winners in this grim game of hierarchy hardly seems worth the effort, none of the main players excluding Norm (David Hayman), the boss, seem to have anything particularly worth having. And yet their scrabble to retain a shit-hole kingdom becomes a fascinatingly unmissable trip into a metaphorical and actual Hell.

And though we are witness to *Bull*'s unnecessarily horrible torture at the hands of Norm and his rag-tag band of hangers-on, Williams also ensures that any sympathies we might have for the protagonist will be hard-fought for, as his form of extreme cruelty is never kept off the screen for long.

The only true indicator of the film's supernatural leanings comes when we first witness the exposed jet black eyes of *Bull* himself, and the terror is increased exponentially because we share that disclosure with a terrified onscreen female priest.

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***The Feast/Gwledd (2022)***  
**Lee Haven Jones**

This Welsh language ‘folk horror’ not only delves back into familiar territory it also brings something refreshingly new to the sub-genre.

Britain has a strong heritage of ‘folk horror’ movies linked indelibly to its strange murky history and connection to the land...

*“When the first sarsen stone was raised in the circle of Stonehenge, the land we call England was already very ancient. Close to the village of Happisburgh, in Norfolk, seventy-eight flint artefacts have recently been found; they were scattered approximately 900,000 years ago...”*

**Peter Ackroyd**  
***The History of England Volume 1: Foundation***

But if modernity and city/town-based life has done its utmost to bury an ancient past, pretend it is something else or forget it entirely, then at least in the 70s, TV and filmmakers arguably sought to draw us back to the land and its cavernous origins.

Many children’s programmes from that era seemed to set out not to provide wholesome entertainment but to cripple us with nervous breakdown-inducing nightmares.

- *Sky* (1975)
- *Children of the Stones* (1976)
- *The Owl Service* (1970)

Part of their appeal and lasting memory was to do not only with the interesting ideas they presented us with in terms of the text but also the nature of their look and feel.

In an age of ultra-high definition digital presentation, it’s hard to replicate that grainy texture and slightly woozy appeal of those shows from over fifty years ago.

Springing somewhere out of the dying hippy era, blurred with a sort of psychedelic veneer, these presentations, mixing film and video, tapped into current obsessions with occultism

And it’s fair to say that though we as citizens of this land share a universal commonality with other races and people, ours is a long and stranger history than most. Our royal lines, changing dynasties, legends, folklore, forgotten histories and our pagan past somehow get linked together and embroiled in whatever we do. Our politics, work ethics, and relationship to music, arts, sport and comedy is in some way imbued with a bitter kind of magic.

Never fully letting go of a distant ancestry we are forever reaching back into the ‘once was’ in an attempt to shape who we will be tomorrow. These divergent attitudes and beliefs cross together in an infinitely complicated timeline which is part ancient ley line and part modern traffic jam.

*The Feast* seems to belong to this strange enclave of filmmaking which taps into the above sentiments.

**Premise**

- Cadi arrives at the house of a rich family, whom they believe is the hired hand/caterer
- The real reason for the party is revealed later – a land grab attempt as they try to buy up farmland in order to carry out environmentally unwise oil exploration

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***The Feast/Gwledd (2022) CONT...***

As Cadi becomes more aware of each family member and their separate immoral behaviors, she becomes physically more upset. Cadi's 'upset' manifests itself in differently as each member of the party is 'punished' in some way. Her reactions become a metaphor for the effects that man's environmental destruction has on the land

*"You spit upon the land, you spit upon mankind"*

**Alan Moore**

Like *The Blood on Satan's Claw* or the stories of M.R. James, beforehand *The Feast* is linked unequivocally to its geography. While James explored his nightmares around English coastal sites and archaeological digs, here we are taken further inland, players appear lost, their insignificance in comparison to other unknowns is highlighted by their physical place in the scheme of things the surrounding fields, pastures and meadows seem to roll out into an infinity.

***Enys Men (2022) and The Feast***

While numerous 'folk horror' features have spilled from this country and others, most have had an overly male focus. *Enys Men* (2022) and *The Feast* (2022) place the woman at the heart of the story – the 'mother' in mother nature is distinctly underlined. While the former is, haunting and understated and the latter contains more visceral forms of horror, both seem transfixed by the notion of 'land' as a living force - *Enys Men* Island and *The Rise*

***Saint Maud (2019)*****Rose Glass**

A nurse named Katie fails to save the life of a patient in her care, despite attempting CPR. Sometime later, Katie, referring to herself as Maud, becomes a devout Roman Catholic and is working as a private palliative care nurse in an English seaside town.

*"Rose Glass's electrifying debut feature establishes the writer-director as a thrilling new voice in British cinema."*

**Mark Kermode**

*"...a genuinely unsettling and intriguing film. Striking, affecting and mordantly funny at times, its confidence evokes the ecstasy of films like Carrie, The Exorcist, and Jonathan Glazer's Under the Skin."*

**Danny Boyle**