



Miner as pick-axe murderer in *My Bloody Valentine*

This miner has a heart

By GREG BURLIUK

IF MY BLOODY VALENTINE becomes a successful film, it could do as much damage to the Valentine's Day card industry as *Jaws* did to coastal resorts. Certainly anyone who's seen it will be in no hurry to receive as gifts any of those heart-shaped boxes of chocolates. On the other hand, audiences who like to be terrified may be only mildly titillated by this tale of mayhem in the mines.

The Canadian-made horror movie, now appearing at the Capitol 2, was produced by John Dunning and Andre Links, who can lay just claim to the title *Kings of Schlock*. The two were responsible for *Meatballs*, which didn't whet the appetite of critics but of which the gross receipts totalled more than \$50 million, making it the most successful Canadian film ever made.

Meatballs achieved success by joining a raft of films imitating the crude slapstick of National Lampoon's *Animal House*. Having secured their place in the annals of schlock comedy, Dunning and Links have now moved to horror flicks. Their product has a villain who is modelled after the murderer in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and who likes to despatch his victims in the same fashion as the one in *Prom Night*. To top it all off, he gets to practise his macabre trade in a great place for murder: a mine.

It's been 20 years since there has been a Valentine's Day dance in the small seacoast town of Valentine's Bluff. That's because 20 years earlier a mining disaster killed five miners when two supervisors left their posts early without checking the methane gas levels. They had been eager to get to the town Valentine's Day dance. The ensuing explosion trapped the miners for six weeks. The only survivor, Harry Warden, resorted to cannibalism and went insane. A year later, he escaped from a mental hospital and, clad in miner's garb and respirator mask, returned to pick-axe the supervisors to death. Their hearts were cut out, placed in heart-shaped chocolate boxes and sent to the dance, as a warning to the townspeople never again to hold a St. Valentine's Day Dance.

And sure enough, once the decision to re-institute the dance is made, grisly hearts start appearing once more in Valentine's Day boxes, with ominous warning notes inside. The town's sheriff and mayor decide

MY BLOODY VALENTINE, a film directed by George Mihalka. Written by John Beard; cinematographer Rodney Gibbons; produced by John Dunning, Andre Link and Stephen Miller. A Paramount production playing at the Capitol 2.

CHARACTERS

T.J.	Paul Kelman
Sarah	Lori Hallier
Axel	Neil Affleck
Hollis	Keith Knight
Patty	Cynthia Dale
Chief Newby	Don Francis
Mabel	Patricia Hamilton
Mayor Hanniger	Larry Reynolds

to comply with the killer's request and cancel the dance. But a group of young miners and their girl friends decide instead to have a party at the mine recreation hall. You can almost hear the murderer shout through his respirator at this turn of events, since now they'll be on his home turf. And when a group of the young revellers decide to go for a ride in the mine, well what more could any self-respecting pick-axe murderer ask for? It's almost like taking chocolates out of the box, especially since, like all horror-flick victims, these people insist on wandering off in pairs.

In between dodging axes, an attempt is made to establish a love story. T.J. (Paul Kelman) has returned to town having failed to make it in the big city, only to find his buddy Axel (Neil Affleck) going out with his girl Sarah (Lori Hallier).

If I were a miner, I'd sue the makers of this film for defamation of character. The miners here are made out to be a bunch of airheads who, in between opening beers, stage some of the dullest parties anywhere. Not content to burrow in the mine like moles during the daytime, they come back at night to use it as a playground.

The acting is wooden and so is the dialogue, so it is a relief that the latter half of the film is taken up with the murderer stalking the victims in the mine.

In the end, *My Bloody Valentine* leaves everyone disappointed. Gore-lovers won't see the rivers of blood and guts they're used to. Even if you like your terror bloodless, the film telegraphs its every moment of murder, so that you can't even be scared properly.

The only parties who might be pleased are rubber fetishists and those on diets. We see the murderer kill his first victim in the mine after she has undressed and fondled the hose on his mask. And anyone with a sweet tooth might not find those lovers' chocolates quite so alluring. □