

# Once more, with ketchup

MY BLOODY VALENTINE

Directed By George Mihalka

**L**ike any of the horror films aping John Carpenter's *Halloween*, the Canadian production *My Bloody Valentine* offers us a spectacle of starlets being brutally slaughtered by a homecoming homicidal maniac. This time the story is set in a mining town and the pre-credit sequence is a kinky encounter between a push-up bra and a pickaxe. Although shopworn—witness *Prom Night*, *Mother's Day* and the other red-stained photocopies—the basic formula is still as solid as it was in Hitchcock's 1942 *Shadow of a Doubt* and it is likely that there are successful variations to come.

Unfortunately, nothing awaits the viewer of *My Bloody Valentine* but a series of shock cuts and ketchup-dripping props interspersing what seems like a very long Molson's TV commercial. Director George Mihalka's male-bonding routines not only fail to obscure the Nova Scotia location but manage to insult the province's population. These people seem so witless that by the time the laundromat lady, dottily played by Patricia Hamilton, rolls cooked to death out of a clothes dryer, we are ready to hope for a swarm of killer bees to shield the cast from further embarrassment. They are asked to feign horror as the film's pilfered, then botched, gimmicks pile up: the body-in-the-freezer from *Rabid*, the girl-on-the-hook from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and the Darth Vader aqualung on the soundtrack. Directing his actors with the same sloppy style as in *Pinball Summer*, but laying on some *Deer Hunter* pretenses, Mihalka arms Neil Affleck with warmed-over Robert De Niro moves; Affleck occasionally forgets and lapses into spasmodic rages.

*My Bloody Valentine* is well-lighted and shot by Rodney Gibbons, but John Beard's script conspires with the direction to fail even as passable pulp. The worst mistake was squeezing working-class characters of marrying age into a formula suited to suburban teen-agers. The most tasteless feature of *My Bloody Valentine* is not the excessive gore but the film's condescension. In the end, this isn't even a movie but a failed machine of manipulation. —BART TESTA