



Phantasm III: Lord of the Dead

US : 1994 : dir. Don Coscarelli : : 91 min
prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:
[Kevin Connors](#) [d]
Reggie Bannister, A. Michael Baldwin; Angus Scrimm; Bill Thornbury; Gloria Lynn Henry;
Cindy Ambuehl; John Chandler; Brooks Gardner

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Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001 review:

"More flying silver spheres, cannibal gnomes, stolen bodies, explosions, and the Tall Man – still doesn't make much sense. The end is especially unsatisfying, with limp humour, unnecessary sex scenes, and amateurish acting. Followed by another video sequel. *1/2 "

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "The Critics' Film Guide" or "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995"]

What's On TV review:

"That Tall Man and those devious silver balls are back and up to deadly mischief. Padded out with scenes from the two earlier movies, this is the same jagged recipe as before, except that someone forgot to write a decent ending. 33 "

"Horror sequel. Two brothers try to prevent a ghoulish mortician from resurrecting an army of the undead. 33 "

At the end of the film Coscarelli has the Tall Man declare "It's *never* over!" – and boy, he wasn't kidding. I have a soft spot for the original film, made by a director still in his teens, dragging ideas from hither and yon into a hotchpotch horror fantasy with a nice vein of throwaway humour. But having now watched two out of three wholly redundant sequels my enjoyment of "**PHANTASM**" will be seriously impaired. If his tongue is still in cheek, there's precious little evidence of that on screen, and it all looks now like the lame, derivative, quasi-amateur rubbish that the original film all too closely resembled, except for the humour and flashes of grisly invention. Like the "**CRITTERS**" series, it just seems to go pointlessly on and on, adding nothing interesting to the original formula, and even recycling great gobs of its own footage. Angus Scrimm is definitively killed off here, just as he was in "**PHANTASM II**", only to march right out again – surprise! – to swing the door open for the next greedy sequel.

What we have in terms of extras are a young boy, Tim (Kevin Connors, who made "**PREHYSTERIA 2**" the same year) and a Grace Jones clone spouting such well-turned lines as "It's bin nice knowin you guys, but this kickin zombie ass just ain't my gig. I'm outa here now. Keep your balls in the air, Reg". You start to wonder whether Coscarelli wasn't just a redneck all along, content to furnish the video rental market with brainless junk food.

If the storyline had anywhere to go from the first film, Coscarelli could have fleshed out the briefly-glimpsed parallel world to which the compressed reanimated corpses were being shipped. Mike, as a boy, also stumbled on a photograph in an antique shop showing the same nameless Tall Man at the reins of a 19th century horse-drawn hearse. The later films add nothing at all to the character's identity or motivation, observe no internal logic, and become a tedious string of zombie-splating episodes, perked up with throwaway sex scenes.

Also, whereas Mike (Baldwin) in the original film was a gutsy, inquisitive and resourceful kid brother who propels much of the action himself, Tim here is an off-the-peg horror film kid requiring perpetual rescue by his adult buddies, as such a far less interesting character.

It's an obvious remark but I can't resist it – Coscarelli's films are the brainless dead that keep being reanimated to torment the living. A worthless exercise. ***To be avoided.***

See also "[PHANTASM](#)", and subject index under **HORROR**.