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Home to the weird and wonderful

LOCAL film collective SCUM (Society for Cult & Underground Movies) has been chalking up one milestone after another this year.

It came onto the scene about two years ago with free bi-monthly screenings of weird and wonderful films which have never made it to the big screen in Singapore.

These include edgy Japanese pink cinema such as *Female Convict Scorpion: Jailhouse 41* (1972), Blaxploitation flick *Black Belt Jones* (1974) and violent thriller *The Warriors* (1979).

It has since started to introduce newer releases in its repertoire. Critically acclaimed action-drama *The Raid 2* (2014), sci-fi documentary *Jodorowsky's Dune* (2013) and low-budget scare-fest *It Follows* (2014) were all screened earlier this year.

SCUM is now set to embark on its most ambitious project to date: an event billed as Singapore's first Alternative Film Festival. Taking place from next week, Scumscope will feature two premieres and a double-bill of two 1980s horror classics.

Anthony Chiam, who works in the media industry and is one-half of SCUM, says the event is a natural evolution of what he and his partner, designer Herman Ho, have been doing.

"Fundamentally, our aim is to always showcase the bizarre and weird in reel life," explains Mr Chiam. "And one of our main goals was to slowly expand that into a film festival that will include both classics and more contemporary films."

One of the newer films premiering at Scumscope is *Dark Star: HR Giger's*

World (2014), a documentary about the late surrealist artist whose works have inspired numerous sci-fi filmmakers and musicians. Giger is also behind the design of the terrifying monsters in Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979).

The other new release is *Damnationland 2014*, an anthology of short horror films by upcoming Portland filmmakers.

Screening back to back as a double bill are bloody creature feature *Basket Case* (1982) and *Without Warning* (1980), a sci-fi thriller often credited for inspiring the *Predator* (1987-2007) franchise.

The diverse line-up exemplifies the wide range of sub-genres horror films occupy in modern cinema and dovetails nicely with the upcoming Halloween period. "We especially liked Giger's works and thought it might be a good idea to introduce some contemporary films for Halloween 2015 instead of just focusing on the classics," says Mr Chiam. "(But) with the costs involved, we had to limit things to just four films for now."

That is a constant challenge because like all of SCUM's previous screenings, the duo pay for everything out of their own pockets and rely on donations, sponsorships and sales of merchandise to help

defray overheads. It rarely charges for admission – the first time it did was for *It Follows*. *Dark Star: HR Giger's World* and *Damnationland* will also be ticketed but the double bill of *Basket Case* and *It Follows* will be free.

"We are 100 per cent independent and everything's self-funded... as long as a film can sell and help cover the costs incurred, that would be good enough to keep this initiative self-sustaining in the long run," shares Mr Chiam. "We are definitely planning towards having (Scumscope) on an annual basis... and we eventually hope to become renowned for showcasing kick-a** flicks!"

■ Scumscope takes place at The Projector and The Arts House from October 15-29 at various times. For ticketing and line-up details, check the events section of www.scumcinema.com



Dark Star: HR Giger's World (2014) is a documentary about the late surrealist artist (above) whose works have inspired numerous sci-fi filmmakers and musicians. Giger is also behind the design of the terrifying monsters in Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979, left). PHOTOS: SCUMSCOPE, 20TH CENTURY FOX