



SCALA: SEX, DRUGS AND ROCK AND ROLL CINEMA

# Basket Case

## Basket Case

*Directed by:* Frank Henenlotter  
©/Production Companies: Basket Case Company, Analysis Film Corporation  
*Executive Producers:* Arnie Bruck, Tom Kaye  
*Produced by:* Edgar levins  
*Production Executive:* Ray Sundlin  
*Production Manager:* Mort Tashman  
*Location Coordinator:* Peg Cornwell  
*Post-Production Services:* Phantasmagoria  
*Production Assistants:* Arturs Stiebrins, Ramadan Thaqj  
*Assistant Director:* Jerome Horwitz  
*Continuity:* Nancy Archer  
*Casting:* Ilze Balodis  
*Written by:* Frank Henenlotter  
*Director of Photography:* Bruce Torbet  
*Camera:* Bruce Frankel, Jonathan Sinaiko  
*Gaffer:* J.J. Clarke  
*Best Boy:* Warren Webster  
*Key Grip:* Buster Muro  
*Grips:* Harry Archer, Watson Pritchard  
*Editors:* Frank Henenlotter, Eastern Editing, Match Cut Film Service  
*Assistant Editor:* Linda Schubell  
*Art Director:* Frederick Loren  
*Set Construction:* Charles Bennett  
*Makeup:* Ken Clark, Ugis Nigals  
*Special Makeup Effects:* Kevin Haney, John Caglione Jr  
*Hairstyles:* Ken Clark  
*Titles:* Leo Animation  
*Opticals:* Image Galaxy  
*Music:* Gus Russo, David Maswick  
*Percussion:* Harold 'Clutch' Reiser, J. Keith Robinson  
*Music Mixing:* Audio Genesis, Emily Webster  
*Sound Recording:* Sam Peca  
*Sound:* Peter Thomas, Jimmy Muro, Levent Bolukbasi, Magno Sound  
*Psychologist:* Steve Smoller  
*Pilot:* John Suffern  
*Cast:*  
Kevin Van Hentenryck (*Duane Bradley*)  
Terri Susan Smith (*Sharon*)  
Beverly Bonner (*Casey*)  
Robert Vogel (*hotel manager*)  
Diana Browne (*Dr Kutter*)  
Lloyd Pace (*Dr Needleman*)  
Bill Freeman (*Dr Littlander*)  
Joe Clarke (*O'Donovan*)  
Ruth Neuman (*Duane's aunt*)  
Richard Pierce (*Duane's father*)  
Sean McCabe (*young Duane*)  
Dorothy Strongin (*Josephine*)  
Kerry Ruff (*detective*)  
Ilze Balodis (*social worker*)  
Tom Robinson (*thief in theatre*)  
Chris Babson (*Kutter's date*)  
Maria T. Newland (*patient*)  
Florence Schultz, Mary Ellen Schultz (*nurses*)  
Constantine Scopas, Charles Stanley, Sydney Best, Johnny Ray Williams, Yousef Abuhamedh, Lubi Kirsch, Catherine Russell, Mitchell Huval (*hotel tenants*)  
Noel Hall (*drug dealer*)  
Bruce Frankel (*2nd detective*)  
Pat Ivers, Emily Armstrong (*street girls*)  
Russell Fritz (*Casey's john*)  
USA 1981©  
91 mins  
Digital

By the end of 1983, the Scala was using its cinema programme to campaign against the strictures of the Video Recordings Act. Along with *The Evil Dead*, the similarly banned black comedy horror *Basket Case* became the face of the Scala's defiant programming, and eventually a staple of its Saturday all-nighters. What's eating junk food in the padlocked wicker basket? Do you really want to know?

bfi.org.uk

Frank Henenlotter's deeply scuzzy yet vastly entertaining low-budget horror has one of the most deliciously literal titles of all time. It stars Kevin Van Hentenryck as Duane, a fresh-faced, curly-haired nerd who arrives on the grimy streets of early 80s New York with a locked basket under his arm. Inside the basket resides Belial, his embittered, grotesquely deformed Siamese twin: the result of a surgical separation in their youth. Together, the pair embark on a bloody quest for revenge against all who've wronged them, beginning with those poor doctors...

'This is the sickest movie ever made!', screamed the famously crotchety critic Rex Reed... but the film's distributor didn't mind, and promptly slapped the quote all over its promotional campaign. *Basket Case* spawned two further sequels. Both are entertaining enough on their own terms, but neither are able to capture the original's perfect storm of poignancy and sheer terror.

Ashley Clark

## A contemporary review

*Basket Case* is a film which wears its sleaziness with pride. The end titles announce that the film is dedicated to Herschell Gordon Lewis, whose 1960s drive-in dreadfuls *Blood Feast* and *Two Thousand Maniacs!* have only recently achieved any kind of British distribution – inevitably as video nasties. Producer Edgar levins and director-writer Frank Henenlotter have gone out of their way to recreate Lewis' wretched style, a combination of graphic gore, off-the-wall humour, the kind of *mise-en-scène* usually only found in hardcore pornography, and inadequate performances.

For about half its running time, *Basket Case*'s deliberate ghastliness is amusing. All the characters are socially handicapped to such a degree that the leads of *Trash* could look down on them, and the nearest that the script comes to a romantic line is Dr Kutter's 'You're cute when you slobber'. Most reviews have cited De Palma's *Sisters* as the source of the plot, but Duane and Belial are much less like the twinned Margot Kidder than the protagonist(s) of 'The Mannikin', one of Robert Bloch's more unpleasant short stories.

Unfortunately, the film establishes its situations with much more invention than it develops them. The flashback includes not only the best sick joke (Mr Bradley's legs falling out of frame after he has been sawn in half) but the most imaginative and affecting images (Belial weakly clawing his way out of a twist-tie garbage bag; the aunt cradling Belial as she reads aloud to the brothers).

## SCALA: SEX, DRUGS AND ROCK AND ROLL CINEMA

### Basket Case

Mon 1 Jan 15:20; Thu 25 Jan 20:40

### Pink Flamingos

Mon 1 Jan 18:20; Fri 19 Jan 18:20; Fri 26 Jan 20:50  
(+ intro by Mark Moore and Tasty Tim)

### Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!

Tue 2 Jan 18:20; Thu 18 Jan 21:00 (+ intro by film scholar and writer Virginie Selavy)

### Taxi zum Klo

Wed 3 Jan 20:50; Mon 8 Jan 20:40 (+ intro by Vic Roberts, Scala usher)

### The Warriors

Sat 6 Jan 18:15; Sun 14 Jan 12:00; Wed 17 Jan 20:55 (+ intro by SCALA!!! co-director Ali Catterall)

### Thundercrack!

Sat 6 Jan 20:00; Sun 14 Jan 14:10

### The Evil Dead

Fri 5 Jan 20:45 (+ intro by Graham Humphreys, freelance illustrator and designer of the original UK marketing for The Evil Dead); Tue 30 Jan 18:10

### Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom

Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma

Tue 9 Jan 20:35 (+ intro by season curator Jason Wood, BFI Executive Director of Public Programmes & Audiences); Tue 23 Jan 18:10

### Sight and Sound Presents:

#### Scala Spirit 1993-2023

Thu 11 Jan 18:20

### Shivers

Thu 11 Jan 21:00; Sun 21 Jan 15:20

### Pee-wee's Big Adventure

Fri 12 Jan 18:10 (+ intro by Ben Roberts, BFI CEO);  
Wed 31 Jan 18:20

### Pink Narcissus + Un chant d'amour

Fri 12 Jan 20:40; Thu 25 Jan 18:20

**The Saint: Teresa** + intro by Dick Fiddy, Archive TV Programmer + **The Avengers: A Touch of Brimstone**

Sat 13 Jan 14:30

### Looking for Mr Goodbar + Dick

Sat 13 Jan 17:45 (+ intro by season curator Jane Giles); Mon 22 Jan 20:10

### The Thing

Sat 13 Jan 20:40; Mon 29 Jan 20:45

### The Beast La Bête

Tue 16 Jan 20:45; Tue 23 Jan 20:50

**Surprise Film** + intro by season curator Jane Giles  
Sat 20 Jan 17:10

### A Clockwork Orange

Sun 21 Jan 18:00; Wed 31 Jan 20:25

### Shock, Horror! The Scala All-nighter:

**An American Werewolf in London; The Creature from the Black Lagoon – 3D; Videodrome;**

**The Incredible Shrinking Man; A Nightmare on**

**Elm Street**

Sat 27 Jan 22:30 BFI IMAX

Sadly, the revenge motif, with Belial killing the doctors who performed the separation, and Belial's jealous attempts to frustrate Duane's relationship with Sharon, are not strong enough to sustain the film beyond the resolution of its mystery. The main problem lies with the overstated performances of all concerned, as satirically feigned badness all too easily turns into genuine badness.

Henenlotter's previous works include the evocatively titled-but unseen-shorts, *Son of Psycho*, *Lurid Women* and *Slash of the Knife*. His approach to the skid-row splatter movie can best be judged by the account of *Basket Case*'s trick effects he gave to *Fangoria*, chief organ of the sleaze scene: 'Crude? Rather than putting in a credit for special effects, we were thinking of crediting ordinary effects ... All the animation scenes were ad-libbed, and every take we shot is included in the film. Ray Harryhausen can certainly sleep tonight.'

Kim Newman, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, April 1983

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