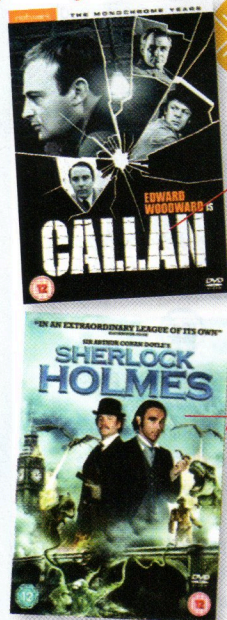




*This month: IRA ghosts, one shit Sherlock and a man with a zombie mum*



THE LATE EDWARD WOODWARD BECAME nationally famous in a spy series collected almost in its entirety in two box sets: **Callan: The Monochrome Years** and **Callan: The Colour Years**. David Callan (Woodward), introduced in TV play *A Magnum For Schneider*, is a chippy, lower-middle-class secret agent employed by a succession of toffs to get rid of inconvenient people or sort out ungodly messes — he also paints model soldiers and hangs around with smelly informant Lonely (Russell Hunter), who thinks he's a big-time crook and specialises in self-hating neurotic hardman business. Created by writer James Mitchell, the series is full of cynical, unexpected turns and Cold War dirty deeds. Like all great British telly, it's about the characters: Callan and Lonely are unforgettably poignant and horribly comical.

An earlier great British hero gets trashed in **Sherlock Holmes** (no — not the Guy Ritchie film), which criminally manages to be boring though it features Holmes (whiny Ben Syder — perhaps the worst screen Sherlock ever) and Watson (Torchwood's Gareth David-Lloyd) versus dinosaurs, a giant squid, a 19th century Iron Man knock-off and a robot dragon. Awful CGI, worse acting. You'd be better off with more vintage TV, **The Rivals Of Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Second Series**. Here, the likes of John Thaw, Charles Gray

## DUNGEON BREAKOUT

Ex-cop writer/director Olivier Marchal's **MR73** is firmly in Bad Lieutenant territory, following the downward spiral of a Marseille flic (Daniel Auteuil) whose drunken stunts get him thrown off the case of a serial killer who is brutally raping, torturing and killing around town. Meanwhile, a barmaid (Olivia Bonamy) dreads the

release from prison of the psycho (Philippe Nahon) who killed her parents. There's a lot of cynical inside-the-police business and some grim crime scenes, but it boasts a couple of stand-out suspense sequences and a terrific performance from Auteuil as the drunk who loses everything but his ability to spot a clue.

and Derek Jacobi play turn-of-the-century sleuths tackling fatal ladies, scowling dastards and perplexing problems in a manner which shows cheap doesn't have to mean dull.

Upper lips remain stiff in **The Night My Number Came Up**, a suspenseful 1955 picture which is like a very, very polite *Final Destination* film: Denholm Elliott and other pukka types (plus one low-class bouncer) try to avoid death on a flight Michael Hordern has dreamed will end in a crash. In contrast, **Keep Fit** — starring the inexplicable George Formby as a weedy department-store employee humiliated during a health campaign — shows the British film industry of 1937 could toss off comedies every bit as agonising as Stan Helsing or *Meet The Spartans*. **Eagles Over London**, directed by Enzo G. Castellari, is half-way between the respectable World War II epics of the 1960s and the inglorious bastardry of the Italian director's later work: during the Battle Of Britain, Italian-looking Germans disguised as Italian-looking Englishmen infiltrate London, but the goodies soon tumble to them. It offers some spectacle: this is one of those films where you only have to see a line of refugees on the road to Dunkirk to know they'll soon be strafed by the Luftwaffe.

**Feast II: Sloppy Seconds** and **Feast III: The Happy Finish**, both directed by John Gulager, are lively, ultra-gory horror sequels with cynical flair, if a bit too much early Peter Jacksonery — these are the sort of films in which characters happily toss a baby to a pack of toothy mutants or catapult their dying grannies off a roof in order to survive. The British **S.N.U.B.** has escaped-convict mutants terrorising establishment types in a bunker after a nuclear explosion in London, while the Northern Irish **Ghost Machine** has a tortured terrorist becoming a Sadako-like veiled spook and invading a computer simulation game intended as a training aid for Special Forces but borrowed by geeks with a different agenda. These quickies have bright ideas and show ambition, but suffer from flat acting and conventional dialogue. Still, they're miles better than **Lockjaw: Rise Of The Kulev Serpent**, which proves yet again that you should never trust a horror film starring a rapper (DMX) and a giant CG snake.

Jamie Thraves' **The Cry Of The Owl** must have been a near-miss theatrical prospect, and now qualifies as a direct-to-video gem, with terrific, noirish work from Paddy Considine and Julia Stiles in a Patricia Highsmith yarn about a troubled sado whose problems get worse when the girl he fantasises about invites him into her life — and her ex-boyfriend takes

**QUOTE OF THE MONTH**  
**"FAINT HEART NEVER**  
**FUCKED A PIG."**  
**GHOST MACHINE**

things very badly. The Canadian **Autumn**, based on a novel by British writer David Moody, is another zombie apocalypse, but surprisingly downbeat and intelligent, with a strong performance by Dexter Fletcher as a bewildered survivor and a showy ham cameo from David Carradine as the loser who wants to stay at home with his zombie mum.

