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The Deadly Spawn Blu-ray Review: A Wonderful Slice of Gory, Cheapo '80s Sci-Fi / Horror that Delivers

One of the most cherished memories of my mostly-wasted teenage years was the time I spent renting obscure horror and science fiction movies from the video store. Back then, there were several video stores in the small community I lived in, and the bigger ones offered a "five movies (on VHS) for five days for five dollars" package. Seeing that I was already a very mad-about-motion-pictures kind of lad, I was back at the store every other day (my visits were sometimes more frequent than that — there wasn't much else for me to do, folks), and my list of "weird and forgotten flicks I have seen" grew exponentially.

Sure, there were some god-awful discoveries in the mix, but I also found a number of memorable movies that have since become "legends" in my book. But, as anyone who has ever revisited a childhood favorite knows, some "classics" can turn into complete and total shit 20 years on. Fortunately, my re-examination of the gory 1983 sci-fi/horror oddity *The Deadly Spawn* was not one of those movies that lost its appeal. In fact, it only became better over the years.

Made for an outrageously stumpy \$25,000 by a group of New Jersey folk, including renowned fantasy artist Tim Hildebrandt, future effects guru John Dods, and filmmaker Ted A. Bohus (who also produced two of Don Dohler's films, so the movie has the same feel as *Nightbeast*, which is a huge plus for me), *The Deadly Spawn* begins with a meteorite crashing to the ground one dark and fateful night. A couple of campers investigate, only to unleash a grotesque creature that keeps growing in size and loves to eat people. It also generates numerous baby squiggly alien larvae-like critters that do the same.

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basement of a residence, the alien with lots of teeth and a big mouth to accommodate 'em all starts to munch on anyone who comes down — its offspring venturing out to find food of their own. The body count rises, with the aliens attacking an electrician, a group of older ladies hosting a soiree, and a majority of the family members in the house above the main alien's hiding place. Meanwhile, a group of kids try to figure out how to stop the growing menace, including three high school students and the younger brother (Charles George Hildebrandt, Tim's son) of one of them who just happens to be a geeky horror movie buff (gee, I wonder why I loved the movie so much when I was a teen!) with an affinity to monsters — and their weaknesses.



When released nationwide, *The Deadly Spawn* found itself being re-titled in order to cash in on the rumor of a sequel to Ridley Scott's *Alien*, to wit the movie was called *The Alien's Deadly Spawn*, *The Return of the Alien's Deadly Spawn*, and *The Return of the Aliens: The Deadly Spawn*. When you compare the movie's budget with its special effects, it's safe to say that the results are outstanding. Blood flows at the drop of a hat, faces get tore off, and heads are severed, but the film still retains a certain naïve charm that sets it light-years apart from today's awful torture-porn movies. Yes, it's a cheapo production, but it kicks all kinds of ass — even several decades later.

No stranger to the digital era of home video, *The Deadly Spawn* received an excellent release in 2004 by Synapse Films. Now, eight years later, the formerly dormant company of Elite Entertainment — in conjunction with MVD Visual Entertainment — has awoken to re-release the film on Blu-ray as part of its Millennium Edition series (w

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you can't expect perfection, but the 1.33:1 1080i transfer here isn't that great — especially when compared to the '04 Standard-Definition DVD.

Minor issues aside, the largest complain from me is the ample use of Digital Noise Reduction that is at play here. It really doesn't do the movie any justice -- and only makes it look like an upscaled DVD in the long run. I also noticed a weird glitch towards the finale of the feature where the image dropped out for a brief moment and the entire screen went black, then white. In terms of special features, almost everything here has been ported over from the Synapse release, including some outtakes, audition footage, trailers, and a gallery. New bonus items consist of an audio commentary with Ted A. Bohus and editor Marc Harwood (the other commentaries from the Synapse DVD have been left out here), and an hour's worth of vintage TV materials related to the feature that have been culled from VHS. Ted (complete with a hand puppet of the monster) also welcomes viewers to his cult classic in a very hokey intro.

Ultimately, I love *The Deadly Spawn*. It's a wonderful slice of gory '80s sci-fi/horror that delivers the goods, and seeing it again after all these years is a real treat indeed. That said, I'm not completely in love with this new Elite Entertainment Blu-ray release: the presentation isn't what I was hoping for, here — though it'll do 'til a better transfer comes along.

BY LUIGI BASTARDO

Posted on Thursday, February 16, 2012, by [Luigi Bastardo](#)

Tags: horror 1980s

About the author

Luigi Bastardo is the disgruntled alter-ego of Adam Becvar, a thirtysomething lad from Northern California who has watched so many weird movies since the tender age of 3 that a conventional life is out of the question. You can stalk and annoy Luigi via Insomniac Entertainment and those trendy social sites, Twitter and Facebook.

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