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The Deadly Spawn Review

[Horror](#), [Reviews](#), [Sci-Fi](#), [Screenshots](#) | February 16, 2012 by [Matt Paprocki](#) | [0 Comments and 1 Reaction](#)



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Tom DeFranco Charl...
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You have to appreciate a film like this, one that's doing nothing else other than biding its time so it can avoid showing the creature. It's not as if it has a budget to do much else. Excitement is generated from a toothy tadpole attack at a senior dinner party and the youngest cast member sitting in a basement, staring at it off-screen monster. The latter seems to take up 45-minutes real time.

The kid is stunned though, showing signs of cheap craftsmanship and puzzle solving on the part of the filmmakers. After all, what other excuse is there to show a woman's decapitated head lying on the ground with flesh begin ripped off?

Is *Deadly Spawn* gratuitous? In the best way possible. The movie loves blood, at least as far as the budget allows it to. The alien creature, a denizen born from a stray meteorite, is a goofy, red teething monstrosity. Whatever flaws exist in the suit or the puppet driven heads are masked by the teeth... so many teeth.

This creature feature creeps along, almost entirely in one home, as teenagers and a young horror fan slam doors on the alien. They rant a bit, talk over each other, freak out, and scream. That's all there is, but that's also taking this sub \$20,000 monster mash too literally.

Deadly Spawn acts as an entry gate into the realm of no-budget horror, a genre where even the hilariously campy *Critters* is considered too grandiose for inclusion. Appreciation doesn't come from

the pacing, litany of no-name actors, or cinematography. Enjoyment isn't even "spawned" from the B-movie antics. It's being able to piece together that somewhere cared, knew what they were doing, and had a memorable ride making it.

That's how the props in the bedroom, from posters of *Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* to *Green Slime* and Famous Monsters magazines, become a show of class. Maybe it's not class in the strictest sense, but there's nothing here that's mocking sci-fi/horror icons so much as *Deadly Spawn* has every intention to show them a layer of respect.

Lo and behold, almost 30-years later, *Deadly Spawn* is still around, still finding fans, and still seeing re-release. You can't say the same for the cycle of modern [Asylum schlockbusters](#) being shopped around based on their marketable cheese. Those films, if they even deserve such a moniker, are cranked out en masse to meet loosely defined deadlines. *Deadly Spawn* is a labor of love.

Movie ★★★★★



The slip inside *The Deadly Spawn* Blu-ray contains the following quote from producer Ted A Bohus: "... we probably used a dozen film stocks. So the color imperfections and grain you see is due to the pre-print material."

That would be all well and good if there **was** a visible grain structure. Even the cheapest 16 mm stocks will exhibit some form of gritty appearance, yet there's nothing here. Two reasons exist for that, the first being a woefully crunched AVC encode. There are DVD editions with better bitrates than this. With some fluctuation to account for, it's never enough to appease the frame, with compression introducing a staggering amount of artifacts, mosquito noise, and image break-up.

Non-existence reason number two? DNR. Not a single frame goes by where digital manipulation doesn't come into play. Faces and skin have a unmistakable flat, pasty, and plastic appearance. Close-ups reveal an unacceptable level of smearing, the slightest motion enough to send the disc into a tizzy. Little to no definition is allowed to seep in, and a handful of shots are on the level of a degraded VHS tape, sans the artifacts associated with the format.

Deadly Spawn is so sloppily encoded, there's a massive flub at 1:15:06 where a complete digital breakdown occurs before the screen turns completely gray, breaking the boundaries of the 1.33:1 frame. There's clearly been little attempt at clean-up on the source itself, the myriad of scratches left to their own devices, along with the strips of off-color fading. There is certainly worse out there.

Black levels are one of the only reprieves from this debacle, and only because they soak up everything. The opening scene takes place outdoors as two campers investigate the meteorite, the screen barely able to push any of the image. It doesn't get any better in the house either, the basement producing only partially visible strips of light. That's not only for effect. Allowing some leniency for low grade film stocks still doesn't lend this one a pass.

Colors are intensely oversaturated, especially reds. It's more in line with the flubs of DVD, which is a format this shares a startling resemblance too. Before anyone becomes too up in arms over this lashing of a no-budget '80s flick, be aware the standard has been raised monumentally. Any film, even ones like this, can look remarkable in HD. What has been done here is intentional, needless, and shameful.

Video ★☆☆☆☆

Audio can be given a little leeway, as unlike film stocks, recording equipment and conditions make all the difference. *Deadly Spawn* has a full on "tin can" effect. Each line of dialogue is recited with a substantial warping, partially from an aged source, and probably from a wimpy on-set system. Every background noise, creak of the floor, or outside noise is evident.

Issues are compounded by the damage, including obnoxious popping and wavering volume. Fading is impossible to miss whenever the score ramps up, and lines are lost to the muffled overall quality. At the very least, none of these concerns sound digital. The PCM mono offering stays out of the way, presenting the material as clear as it could be. Clear being, of course, all relative.

Audio ★★☆☆☆

If Elite/MVD Visual skimmed everywhere else, the finances afforded to the release ended up here in the bonus features. Producer Ted Bohus and editor Marc Harwood offer their time for a commentary track, the next menu option being an alternate opening. *Casting and Gags* is 36-minutes of loosely constructed rehearsals and goofing off, all saved to the wonders of VHS. Some bloopers and outtakes define themselves, while a local news interview from a New Jersey station is 40-minutes long.

Take One is another interview, again from a local show, and running for 25-minutes, replete with the worst case of edge enhancement you'll likely ever see. *Visit with the Deadly Spawn* is a vintage trip through the creature shop where the monster was made, which in reality is more of a spare bedroom. A series of trailers, sideshow, and comic book preview remain.

Extras ★★★★★

Full disclosure: This Blu-ray was provided to us for review. This has not affected the editorial process. For more information on how we handle review material, please visit our [about us](#) page to learn more.



Note: Time stamps will be off –
@ :35



There's a reason this is a
miniature @ 1:37



This is your face on DNR @ 6:21



Her hair sort of blend together as
one piece @ 9:50



Let's name it Shelia @ 10:54



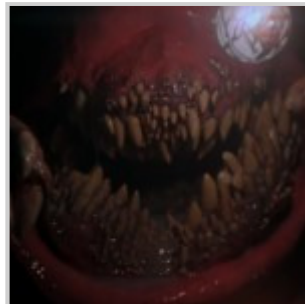
Awesome room @ 12:01



Compression swarms this shot @
15:55



Compression breaks up the
glasses @ 18:06



No on Shelia? How about Trish?
@ 31:36



DNR'ing the group @ 32:50

Tags: [AVC](#), [Blu-Ray](#), [elite entertainment](#), [mvd](#), [PCM](#)



Great shot actually @ 36:09



That's as low grade as it comes @ 43:44



His hair is mush @ 1:00:15



Barbeque! @ 1:12:53



They survived and still ended up with a case of DNR @ 1:14:53



A split second before the screen goes gray @ 1:15:07



THAT would be why the house is in miniature @ 1:20:05

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