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The Deadly Spawn: Millennium Edition - Blu-ray Review

Saturday, 18 February 2012 17:57 Loron Hays



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★★★★☆ B-movie enthusiasts and cult film fanatics can rest easy now.

The darling no-budget creature feature from 1983 finally has found a welcomed home in dazzling high definition. Released by Elite Entertainment, *The Deadly Spawn* finally completes many a freak's quest in the sacred collection of quintessential cult films. It is a film beloved by many creature-feature gorehounds and grisettes and certainly the only to feature slimy penis-looking mutant muthas from outer space that munch on human flesh for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

The film has its origins as a sort of weekend backyard project designed to honor the 50s alien-invasion popcorn flicks that writer/director Douglas McKeown and producers Ted Bohus and Tim Hildebrandt grew up on. They greased the film's mechanics with 80s-styled blood syrup and some gnarly face-chomping make-up effects and, with the aid of a very, very limiting budget, were able to make a name for themselves and for *The Deadly Spawn* on VHS in video stores across the nation.

Yes, I was one of those pimply nerds who rented and rented again the only VHS copy I was able to come across in the single video store in my hometown. It, like the Cheetos that stained my fat fingers orange, was my drug of choice. Of course, back then it was distributed as *Return of the Aliens: The Deadly Spawn* in a Roger Corman-like move to capitalize on the popularity and success of Ridley Scott's *Alien*. Of course, with a shoestring budget and an acting pool that can't pull itself out of the shallow end, there's no confusing the two films.

Essentially, *The Deadly Spawn* is a mutant combination of *The Blob's* matinee antics and the National Geographic article about scientists finding seed pods in the Arctic that originally inspired Bohus to create



this alien invasion. Here, the seed pods arrive via a meteor and multiply like crazy and have a thing for human heads. Discovered by two good-for-nothing campers, the spawn makes quick work of their dumb asses and slithers toward a nearby farmhouse and, eventually, a small town to wreak havoc.

Of course the foolish tenants of the farmhouse are clueless to our space invaders (who have already taken their first victims down into the cellar) and, before long, spend the rest of the movie trapped in the attic... trying to outsmart and outrun the three-rowed sharp teeth of our alien invaders as they slither through the house. Chomp, chomp, chomp.

Outside, the rain won't stop and the basement is flooding. Why? Well, our alien invaders love the moisture and – surprise, surprise, surprise – multiply when exposed to water. (For all you fact checkers out there, *The Deadly Spawn* was made in 1983. *Gremlins* happened a year later. It seems screenwriter Chris Columbus totally swiped this idea. Ahem.) Anyway, lots of people are maimed, killed, beheaded and, of course, the mother of all the creatures grows and grows and grows and eventually pukes up one mommy's head at the feet of her horror movie obsessed boy.

Cue the laughter and the good times. It's sick flick but never all that slick. B-movie heaven, in other words. The acting is clunky, stale and largely hit-and-miss, but the gore is nonstop and ridiculous. It might seem tame by today's standards of schlock and shock filmmaking, but *The Deadly Spawn* has its moments where it absolutely finds its footing when held next to the like.

The Deadly Spawn is the ultimate example of guerrilla filmmaking; it was shot on 16mm and contains so many flubs, dropouts, and herky jerky behind-the-scenes mayhem that one cannot help but fall for this perfect imperfect example of ultimate science fiction freakdom.

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