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[Blu-ray Review: THE DEADLY SPAWN \[The Millennium Edition\]](#)



THE DEADLY SPAWN (1983)
Millennium Edition

Label: [Elite Entertainment](#)

Region Code: A

Duration: 81 mins

Video: Fullscreen (1.33:1)

Audio: English LPCM 2.0

Director: Douglas McKeown

Cast: Charles George Hildebrandt, Tom DeFranco, Richard Lee Porter, Jean Tafler

Deadly Spawn (1983) is an early 80's slice of sci-fi schlock cinema that's stuffed with gore, camp and unintentional hilarity. The story is quite simplistic: a meteorite falls to Earth where it is found by two campers in a remote wooded area whom are torn to pieces by the toothsome alien parasite that arrived with it. The creature makes it's way into town where it finds shelter in the basement of a home and it's not long before the homeowners fall prey to it's toothy maw. The four remaining members of the household slumber completely unaware that an alien menace lays in waiting the basement.

The four remaining members of the home are a young teen named Charles, his older science-nerd brother Pete, their Aunt Mille and Uncle Herb. The character of Charles is a true horror nerd's horror nerd with a deep love of special effects and horror cinema. He's not far removed from Joey from Tobe Hooper's criminally underrated carnival-set slasher **The Funhouse** (1981) or Tommy Jarvis (Corey Feldman) which we would see just a year later in Joseph Zito's **Friday the 13: The Final Chapter** (1984).

As the film plays along the creature in the basement continues to grow with each new victim it consumes. While it grows it also unleashes hundreds of offspring that bare more than a passing resemblance to the

chest-burster from Ridley Scott's **Alien** (1979). The slimy spermal offspring begin to wreak their own toothy menace within the house leading to a final showdown in the attic pitting the special effects wizardry of Charles against the main toothsome alien parasite.

The Deadly Spawn is a film assembled by people whom clearly did not possess a great deal of skill in front of or behind the camera. It's a rickety production from the top down with workman like cinematography, lacklustre editing, poor dialogue and sub-par acting but despite these technical deficits there's just something so damn charming about this film.

The creature-design by John Dods (**Black Roses, Monsters** TV Series) is quite inspired, a three-headed phallic hydra with row upon row of gruesome razor sharp teeth that ooze slime, it's terrific looking in every shot. Also super fun are the creature's spawn which slither across the floor, very cool lo-fi effects, great stuff. The gore is also low-budget but top notch with a some fantastic face shredding featuring the skin peeling right off the face and some gruesome decapitations, definitely low-budget gore done right.

There are some nice touches throughout including a chat between the Uncle (who's a pyschologist) and Charles as the uncle tries to understand the young boy's fascination with the macabe. I also enjoyed the use of miniatures during the films beginning and partricularly the ending, fun stuff that seemed to channel 1950's science fiction features like **The Blob** (1958) and **Invaders from Mars** (1952), fun stuff. The real hero of the film though is the creature design and bloody gore effects, outstanding.

While it's great to see this obscure 80's gore-classic get the high-definition treatment it's not really up to snuff in the audio and video department. Let's start with the transfer; it's been given an atomic-sized dose of Digital Noise Reduction (DNR) to the point that the 16mm grain of the film stock has all but disappeared leaving it pretty anemic looking in the fine detail department, visually it's a lacklustre affair and if you own the previous Synapse Films DVD edition which boasts a superior picture and includes an audio commentary with writer Tim Sullivan, director Douglas McKeown, actor Charles Hildebrandt, special effects artist John Dods, and executive producer Tim Hildebrandt which is not found here. Likewise the audio is unremarkable on every level, it's tinny and boxy with the audio dropping out completely at one point for a split second.

Special Features:

- Introduction with Ted A. Bohus (1:19)
- Audio Commentary with Producer Ted A. Bohus and Editor Marc Harwood
- Effects Enhanced Opening Scene (4:43)
- Casting Tapes and Gag Reel (35:57)
- Bloopers and Outtakes (4:56)
- Local Television Coverage Footage (40:32)
- "Take One" (24:58)
- "Visit with the Deadly Spawn" (8:39)
- Production and Promotional Still Photo Gallery (15:30)
- Color Pages from the Upcoming Comic Book
- A Theatrical Trailer and a T.V. Spot (2:24)
- Full Color Insert featuring Liner Notes by Producer Ted A. Bohus

Verdict: As a fan of 80's horror and schlock cinema I think you need The Deadly Spawn on your shelf, it's a gruesome low-budget alien-chomper that's surely inept but also pretty kick-ass. The poor transfer makes it hard for me to say this is worth an upgrade if you own the Synapse DVD but if you are currently without this in your collection and can pick it up on the cheap I say it's a no-brainer - get it because they just don't make 'em like this anymore.

3 outta 5