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The Deadly Spawn: Millennium Edition

01/04/2012. Contributed by Rod MacDonald

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.MACDONALD

region 1 Blu-ray: pub: Elite Entertainment/MVD Group B005IGVTE2. 81 minute film with extras. Price: GBP10.00 (UK), \$19.95 (US)). cast: Tom DeFranco and Charles George Hildebrandt.

check out website: www.mvdb2.com

Just as I was reviewing this imported American Blu-ray DVD, a bright fireball blazed across the skies of northern Britain. A spectacularly bright phenomenon, it caused quite a stir in the media but if you had watched 'The Deadly Spawn' at about the same time you would have been looking over your shoulder, wondering if this was more than a coincidence. Why? Well, the same thing happened in the movie only the meteor carried with it spawn from space, a deadly spawn that developed into a flesh-eating monster.

What are the ingredients for a good horror movie? You need a low-budget, some pretty awful actors, outrageous rubbery monsters and a dismal quality of sound and vision. Made about thirty years ago, 'The Deadly Spawn' has got all these attributes and certainly fits the bill if you're looking for a cult classic. It has been re-released on Blu-ray, a millennium edition no less, but the significance of this title is not exactly clear. The millennium took place twelve years ago or more precisely, if you are a follower of Arthur C Clarke, on the commencement of the year 2001. Why this is termed a millennium edition is not really explained but, when all is considered, it doesn't really matter.



Going back to the story, a meteor lands on Earth and with it comes a deadly alien species which regenerates and comes to life out in the woods. Having been stuck in space for a very long time, it's ravenously hungry enough to eat just about anything, including the odd human being it happens to encounter in its way. It's pouring down, torrential rain in fact, and a group of teen-agers in a house have to prevent themselves from becoming the monster's next meal.

It certainly is a monster to behold. Yes, over the top perhaps, but this huge mouth brimming with teeth, perched on top of a snake like stalk, would frighten the life out of anyone. With no table manners or eating etiquette, it devours people with hideous relish, eating everything including skin, bones, guts and garters. To make matters worse, the creature multiplies quite quickly and soon there's junior monsters as well, each hungrier than the next. With ironic charm, a group of vegetarians sitting down to a meal become the menu for the monsters! There seems to be no stopping this lot and an extrapolation of their ferocious fecundity would soon see the whole of the planet devoured.

As monsters come, you won't get much better than this. If you want plenty of blood and gore, say no more! Some of the action is riotously funny and, in some respects, movie is meant to be taken as a joke. The end result is satisfyingly good, like having a nice meal somewhere with everything turning out to your delight. In fact, this movie could not be made now. It would be ruined by computerised special effects and all the charm and nostalgia would be completely taken out of it, making the movie sterile and lifeless. That's the reason why a thirty year-old movie has been re-released. Despite the fact that it only cost a pittance to make, it just couldn't be done today.

This Blu-ray edition comes with tons of extras, enough to keep you occupied for a couple of hours at least. There are interviews with director Douglas McKeown, the special effects technician John Dods and the producer Ted A. Bohus. You've got plenty of still pictures, alternative scripts, funny scenes and a couple of additional featurettes. It must be said that the quality of this extra package isn't exactly good because it suffers in the sound and vision department which is what you would expect from old material that has been transposed from videotape. Accepting this, it's interesting stuff and is a welcome addition to the movie itself.

As with most good monster movies, it takes a while for it to be revealed in its true visual self. At the crash site, the people investigating the meteor disappear into the shadows. The creature gets to a basement where it dispatches husband and wife, not at the same time, and it's only later do we see it full frontal. More horrific to some extent are the minions, the little offshoots which go everywhere, through the plumbing and ventilation to make it safe for nobody. How do they kill off the monsters? With that meteor coming over last night, this information might be quite useful but I'm not going to tell you. It would be a spoiler! If you find the monster in your basement I'm afraid you'll have to run out and buy your own copy.

The producer Bohus went on to make other movies which included the sequel to this one called 'Metamorphosis: The Alien Factor' and also the evocatively named 'Vampire Vixens From Venus'. No doubt 'The Deadly Spawn' will outlive them all. It was a sort of landmark movie which others followed at their peril. Some of the scenes involving the creatures devouring humans didn't leave much to the imagination and anything made after that in the movies was just second-rate.

I would definitely say this Blu-ray is worth purchasing if you are a fan of vintage horror. Not only is this hilarious in its absurdity, it is also scary into the bargain. Few movies have been able to achieve this balance but 'The Deadly Spawn' does it successfully. Watching it is also a trip back in time, thirty years or more, where creation and imagination went hand-in-hand making this an education in itself. Lots of the horror movie monsters going about now are probably spawns from the thing in the basement you'll find inside this package. If you buy it, will you have the guts to open it?

Rod MacDonald



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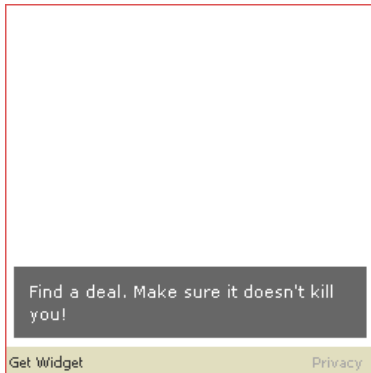
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