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The Deadly Spawn (Millennium Edition)

1983

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The 80's was a time which was filled with horror movies that were really pretty bad, not that this was something unusual since you can find this to be true in virtually any decade. However despite how horribly made many of them were, they also were the ones which manages to surpass the disdain of critics and become cult classics in one way or anyone. Some may not have reached quite the same status as others "classics" but regardless they have become the thing that many horror fans love to watch on what could be considered a bad movie night filled with blood, guts, and laughs.

The Deadly Spawn was one of many horror/science fiction hybrids found during the 80's which were inspired by the success of *Alien*. These imitators never managed to elevate themselves to the same level of success as Ridley Scott's classic but they still gained quite a bit of attention especially with VCR's becoming the norm in households across the United States and video stores lining their shelves with movies that most had never heard of. As with many science fiction films *The Deadly Spawn* begins with a meteorite crashing to Earth and discovered by a pair of campers who make the unfortunate mistake of encountering the alien creature that has travelled along with it. After devouring them the alien makes its way into the basement of a nearby home where it soon feasts on the parents of Charles (Charles George Hildebrandt) and Pete (Tom DeFranco.) While Charles soon meets the alien face-to-face, the others are unaware of its presence although Pete's friends have found a strange creature which they have dissected and determined isn't of our world. The ravenous creature and its spawn soon begin to emerge and devour any unfortunate enough to cross their path.

It's certainly not the height of movie making magic and *The Deadly Spawn* is filled with plenty of low budget, poorly crafted moments which end up being good for a laugh more than a scare, but regardless it has become one of those classic horror movies which is just entertaining to watch. The script is often filled with dialog that makes little to no sense at times, something which truly is one of the many gems not only of horror movies from the 80's but many of the classic drive-in science fiction movies of the 50's and 60's. The dialog however never really devolves to the point of just throwing a series of scientific jargon together in an effort to form something that the writers deemed was "cohesive" but there are still moments where one has to wonder what was being thought when it was written or if some is merely just adlibbed

The Deadly Spawn is also something of a tribute to the monster movies of decades past, a time when imaginations were fueled by cheesy science fiction tales of Atomic testing run amuck. This however began to take a turn as the genre moved into more stark, Utopian threats of our future and then into the premise that something unknown from space could pose an unheard of threat. It's the same idea that movies like *The Thing*, *The Blob*, and *War of the Worlds* have become best known for. Having it once again become the main plot point shouldn't have surprised anyone but whereas George Lucas' *Star Wars* proved to studios that science fiction could be profitable, Scott's *Alien* showed that horror and science fiction could be blended together.

While director Douglas McKeown worked on a number of short films and attempted to do other movies, *The Deadly Spawn* is the one that he is known for and is actually the only movie attributed to him on IMDB. He might not have managed to become quite the name in B-movies as others, but *The Deadly Spawn* is a great movie to have attached to your name. It's the type of film which goes along perfectly with other bad films like *Basketcase*, any of the horror movies that H.G. Lewis created, *Attack and the Killer Tomatoes*, and a list of others. However if it weren't for the inventiveness and low budget approach of these filmmakers, we probably wouldn't have the likes of Peter Jackson or Sam Raimi working in cinema today. *The Deadly Spawn* definitely has more than a few moments of low budget filmmaking but regardless it's a very good effort which has merit and memorable moments.

The transfer of the movie however isn't the best. There are quite a few visual pops seen during the movie, many of the dark scenes in the movie find the details getting lost and the picture quality isn't quite as sharp as one might hope for. When you do a comparison to the bonus features, all of which are in standard definition, you will notice there is improvement although nothing that is incredibly drastic. *The Deadly Spawn* also doesn't have a great audio upgrade and is still in mono.

The blu-ray release of *The Deadly Spawn* features commentary from Ted A. Bohus and Marc Harwood. Also found on the disc is an introduction to the movie by Bohus, an alternate opening for the movie, casting tapes, a gag reel, bloopers and outtakes, a rather impressive collection of local news footage on the movie, stills, and a ton of other stuff which is perfect for fans of the film.

The Deadly Spawn might not have become quite the cult hit as other movies but there is still a certain mystique about it which puts it onto the list of movies that are "so bad, it's good." This is a hybrid that has earned its place as one of those forgettable yet memorable entries into the history of horror and even though the acting, the effects, and even the camera work might not be the best that has ever been, there's just something about the low budget nature of *The Deadly Spawn* which makes it a guilty pleasure to watch.

-mike-

Directed by:
Douglas McKeown

Written by:
Douglas McKeown

Cast:
Charles George Hildebrandt
Tom DeFranco
Richard Lee Porter

Blu-ray Features:
Aspect Ratio: 1.33:1
Audio: English LPCM 2.0
Introduction by Ted A. Bohus
Commentary with Ted A. Bohus and Marc Harwood
Casting Tapes
Gag Reel
Bloopers and Outtakes
Local News Segments

Jean Tafler
Karen Tighe
James Brewster
Elissa Neil
Ethel Michelson
John Schmerling

Take One: The Deadly Spawn Interview
Visit with The Deadly Spawn
Theatrical Trailer
TV Spot

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