



STRANGE THINGS ARE HAPPENING

FEAR THE FOREST

DVD. Lost Empire.

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You have to feel sorry for Bigfoot. Never has a cryptozoological creature had so many awful films made about it as the infamous Sasquatch. No wonder the poor bastard stays hidden in the woods – he's probably ashamed.

The 'unwatchable Bigfoot film' run continues with this 2009 production, a truly horrendous amateur hour effort that drags on for almost to hours and feels more like five. Even in the murky depths of zero budget home movie horror, this is bad.

It opens with a horny couple being offed in their tent by an unseen monster, and then continues with militia and rednecks competing to kill the beast and claim an unlikely \$2.5 million reward. A Bigfoot is indeed spotted and shot, but Baby Bigfoot gets away...

Ten years later, and we meet the most tedious collection of ageing teens (seriously, one of them looks about forty) ever gathered in one movie. Because director Matthew Bora (and there's an appropriate surname) hates us, we get to sit through a *long* and tedious birthday celebration where some 'bad girls' show up for no obvious reason other than to pad things out, leading to an equally pointless karate fight. None of this develops the characters or sets up anything in the plot.

Eventually, they go to the woods for a camping trip, where strange noises lead to a *lot* of incoherent shouting, all shot in night vision for no good reason, before the 'teens' start getting killed off, one by one. Eventually, we're left with a Final Girl, who just happens to be the State Governor's daughter, and who is set upon by a couple of local inbreds before they are killed by the Bigfoot creature. Or are they? As Final Girl meets up with fellow survivor Vest Man, they are helped by a moustached hunter who tells Vest Man to stay put while he takes Final Girl up to his cabin to phone for help. Because these characters are idiots, no one questions this. But it turns out that Mr Moustache is a serial killer who (and I swear I'm not making this up) uses a mechanised claw glove to murder campers and put the blame on Bigfoot. This is, admittedly, an impressively lunatic twist. But viewers who have stayed awake will recall that there's a *real* Bigfoot out there too, and he's not going to take such slanders lying down...

Fear the Forest (or, as it's called in the opening credits, **Fear Forest – The Legend Lives**) runs out of what little story it has after 90 minutes, but still manages to go on for another 20 or so, because Bora doesn't know when to stop. So we get 'a month later' and 'two years later' for no reason whatsoever. Maybe DVD distributors are paying by the minute these days, who knows? In any case, only the most dedicated will have made it that far.

This is the sort of film where characters have to blurt out huge chunks of exposition – no-one can just say "I'm pregnant", they have to give full details of how far along they are, who the father is and how they were planning to marry but it's a secret, even though none of this matters, mainly because the characters are so one dimensional that you'll never remember who is who anyway. The acting is atrocious and the sound so poor that background noises often overwhelm the dialogue anyway – admittedly, not a bad thing on the whole. And while the box boasts that this is the 'unrated version', gorehounds will be somewhat disappointed, as there is little gore on offer. As for Bigfoot – well, imagine a 1930's gorilla suit with a **Where the Wild Things Are** head that has all the dynamic range of the robot ape in the 1976 **King Kong**, and you'll be close. Though it's actually less entertaining than that makes it sound. It's certainly not as good as the fierce beastly on the sleeve.



Bad films can be hugely entertaining – look at **Birdemic**. But they can also be soul destroying experiences that make you wish camcorders had never been invented. **Fear the Forest**, sadly, is very much in the latter camp.

DAVID FLINT

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