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CAST

Dawn Laurrie Jeannie
Aaron Kjenaas Tom
Connie Snyder Karen
David Fields Chris
Jim Cagle Ron
Eve Montgomery Lissa
Bekki Vallin Bessie
Mark Armstrong Bar Lout
Chuck Decker Lout's Friend
Ron Hollnagle Snowgroomer Driver
Jim Gresch Sheriff
Barbara Claman Voiceover Older Jeannie

CREW

Produced and Directed by **Christopher Webster**
Executive Producers **Alexander W. Kogan Jr, Barry Tucker**
Screenplay by **Julian Weaver**
Editor **Amy Sumner**
Director of Photography **Joseph Friedman**
Original Music by **John Tatgenhorst**
Production Manager **Alexandra J. Reed**
SPFX Makeup/Makeup **Jeffery Lyle Segal**
SPFX Makeup/Makeup Assistant **Hank Carlson**
Stunt Coordinator **Gary Paul**



A woman with dark hair, wearing a white turtleneck sweater and a white dress, stands in a room with large windows. She is looking out the window with a concerned expression. The room is dimly lit, with light coming from the window. The background shows a doorway and some furniture.

THE CHILL FACTOR A BEAUTIFUL DISASTER

by Mike White

When filmmakers set out to purposefully craft a bad movie, the results can be a disaster (*The Lost Skeleton of Cadavra* [2001], *Repo! The Genetic Opera* [2008], etc.). But when a movie is truly awful it can be a glorious thing. In recent years we've seen the embrace of some truly terrible films (*The Room* [2003], *Troll 2* [1990], *Showgirls* [1995], *Science Crazy* [1991]) and *The Chill Factor* AKA *Demon Possessed* (1993) deserves to be among their ranks.

We've seen the pattern that this film follows before: a set of friends in a remote location who stumble upon an ancient evil that destroys them one-by-one. These tropes were lampooned to great effect in Drew Goddard's *The Cabin in the Woods* (2011). There's no lampooning here. Christopher Webster directed *The Chill Factor* with deadly seriousness.

The film begins with a swelling soundtrack from John Tatgenhorst – he's best known for bringing the "Hang On Sloopy" tradition to The Ohio State University Marching Band – that plays with all the saccharine schmaltz of a Hallmark movie. Once we're out of the credits we begin to hear the overwrought narration written by Julian Weaver; "The nightmare came to me before dawn, sneaking into my mind, disguising itself as an ordinary dream..." Barbara Claman gives the stilted voiceover as the older version of Jeannie. Claman was better known as a casting director (*Days of Heaven* [1978], *Beastmaster III* [1996]) than an actress, though she oddly enough didn't cast *The Chill Factor*.



The film could have done with a little better casting, but our six main actors give their all as the protagonists out for a weekend snowmobiling trip. We find out about the relationships these characters have with one another during an early exposition dump at an extremely popular watering hole, where the audience discovers that the group seems to be led by Ron Mukovski (Jim Cagle). An off-screen voice (perhaps Mark Decker's) asks, "Aren't you the Mukovski they picked for the Vikings?" This is just the first of some hilarious exchanges of the scene. Things really get rolling when the bar's owner, Bessie (Bekki Vallin) easily coaxes far too many details out of the group.

Ron's fiancée, Lissa (Eve Montgomery) is African American and this gives some locals – including a man with a severe case of over-dubbing – pause. Also along for the ride are Tom (Aaron Kjenaas) and his fiancée Jeannie (Dawn Laurrie), Tom's sweet little sister Karen (Connie Snyder), and the jester character Chris (David Fields).

After some shit talking they decide to have a snowmobiling race on Black Friar lake. This closes the loop fairly quickly from our opening dream sequence as we see the same footage of Tom take a header into a tree. The others take the unconscious Tom to a nearby shelter, a boarded-up Christian summer camp surrounded by a wrought-iron gate.

Our older Jeannie frequently returns to narrate the proceedings, giving the feel of a checkout paperback to *The Chill Factor*, even assigning feelings to other characters that she could only guess.

The in-fighting of the group in crisis is no more or less hilarious than the other exchanges. One can almost hear the voices of the *RiffTrax* guys interacting with the group as they go through the paces as the mystery of Black Friar lake unfolds. Luckily for everyone, Chris is not only a cut-up, but also a medical student. He can take care of Tom while Ron goes for

help. And Jeannie manages to provide some bandages when she doffs her cotton top; "I can't stand nylon next to my skin," she confesses.

Ron won't get lost on his way to town; "Football players don't get lost, honey, they know where the end zone is." Usually there isn't a barbed wire garrote across the end zone.

Karen snoops around the place and finds remnants of Camp St. Dominic including a 1953 camp photo (with the line "Keep the Beast in the Field" beneath it) and a ouija board-type device – a Devil Eye. Having never seen a horror movie before, Chris and the three women decide to play with it even after Jeannie tells them that her mother used to be a fortune teller; "Now, that was scary."

Jeannie places her hands on the Devil's Eye board and begins to breath heavily, throwing her head back. Across the room Tom begins to shake. The wind howls, threatening to blow out the candles lighting the room. The Devil's Eye spins wildly. "I think the other side got through to us," whimpers Jeannie once things calm down. She's right, of course. The editing of this sequence by Amy Sumner is well done as is the dissolve from Tom's now self-satisfied face to Ron's unconscious one.

The only reason this might be better served as a *RiffTrax* movie than a *Mystery Science Theater 3000* choice is the salty language and sexual themes. Director Webster didn't shy away from showing scenes of implied intercourse.

Lissa uncovers a series of letters written to the camp from former attendees which speak to a killer who remained at large. She never has a chance to share this information as she's decapitated by a nasty-looking ceiling fan that seems to operate at the behest of a shadowy figure, perhaps under the command of the still-smirking Tom.



The Devil's Eye board acts as the gateway to evil, as the Necronomicon Ex Mortis in *The Evil Dead* (1981) or the fetish objects beneath *The Cabin in the Woods*. It's the MacGuffin to set our tale in motion, though the audience never learns the full extent of how it may have played a role in the previous events at Camp St. Dominic. There's no big moment of revelation in the film to explain the cryptic "Keep the Beast in the Field" tag on the photo, apart from the newspaper Lissa finds that asks "Satanic Cult at Camp Saint Dominic?" and the inverted cross that Jeannie walks passed.

As to be expected, our main characters die one-by-one in interesting ways (Chris gets an icicle through the eye, showing off some good gore effects) until it's just Jeannie (who we know survives due to her voice-over – no post-mortem V.O. like *Sunset Boulevard* [1950]) and Tom. The pair do the nasty but that's not enough for Tom who, after stroking Jeannie's body with his long fingernails, seems to also have sex with Lissa and Karen (his sister, don't forget).

The following morning Jeannie finds the Devil's Eye still spinning while "Three Blind Mice" plays in a minor key on the soundtrack. She uncovers some of the dead bodies of her friends before having a conversation with a refreshingly honest Devil's Eye. Tom continues to transform into a more demonic form while reminiscing about former camp attendees before Jeannie finally remembers that there's a snowmobile waiting for her. Jeannie runs away with Chris in cold pursuit.

The Chill Factor falls apart at the end. Someone with a bloody face follows Jeannie, trying to knock her off her snowmobile. We never see Chris' face get bloodied. It can't necessarily be Ron because the thing with the bloodied face runs across Ron (not literally) in the forest. There's a moment when "Chris" points at Ron's corpse which leads to nothing. Finally, Chris crashes and gets crushed by a convenient Snowcat driver

(Ron Hollnagle). The snowmobile explodes and the driver catches on fire. There's an effective shot of the burning driver's helmet melting.

Jeannie races off with the local sheriff (Jim Gresch) behind her while her older self narrates the proceedings; "Those poor families don't know to this day what happened to their kids." She tells us that she rode back to the lodge at Black Friar Lake which had burned down twenty years before.

Despite the laughable deliveries and by-the-numbers plot – or perhaps because of them – *The Chill Factor* has an undeniable charm. It's also surprisingly well-done in terms of the direction, editing and more. This no doubt comes from the professional relationship of many of the behind-the-scenes artisans who had worked on *The Inheritor* (1990) and *Trapped Alive* (1988).

The Chill Factor would be the last credited film for writer Julian Weaver, editor Amy Sumner, and producer Barry Tucker. Tucker's producing partner Alexander W. Kogan Jr. would earn a final credit with the 2010 remake of *The Crazies* before passing away in 2017.

Cinematographer Joseph Friedman started his career on Alfred Sole's pornographic *Deep Sleep* (1972) before moving more into documentary territory with Robert Duvall's *We're Not the Jet Set* (1977). He would work with Duvall again on the narrative *Angelo My Love* (1983). After *The Chill Factor*, Friedman would return to working primarily on documentaries including a regular gig as cinematographer and camera operator on the TV series *Nova* (1974 -).

Unsurprisingly, *The Chill Factor* is the only entry on the résumé of many of the actors in the film. Only Bekki Vallin would act in more than one movie after *The Chill Factor* but found more success in her other job as production coordinator (which she served as on a few films Christopher



Webster produced), a role in which she continues to work. Most recently she was production coordinator for *The Ballad of Lefty Brown* (2017) and *Previous Man* (2017).

The Chill Factor remains the only directing credit for Christopher Webster, who is better known as a producer, having executive produced two of the *Hellraiser* films, *Heathers* (1988), *Meet the Applegates* (1990) and 2010's *Deadgirl*. In 2011 he produced a film with a similar story to *The Chill Factor*, Alex Wright's *Seance: The Summoning*.

Certainly, *The Chill Factor* wasn't the first film to use a ouija board-type device with dire results. It was released the same year as the second *Witchboard* movie and presaged the more recent *Ouija: Origin of Evil* (2016), and *The Conjuring 2* (2016). If anything, *The Chill Factor* is far more fun than the aforementioned films. It's a ridiculous, laughable, solid little horror film.

Mike White is the host of the Projection Booth podcast.





ABOUT THE RESTORATION

The Chill Factor has been exclusively restored by Arrow Films and is presented in 1.85:1 with stereo audio.

An original 35mm low-con print was scanned in 2K resolution, graded and restored at OCN Digital Labs.

The soundtrack was sourced from a set of original 2" tape masters.

All restoration work was completed at OCN Labs.

All original materials used in this restoration were accessed from Films Around the World.

Colourist: Lannie Lorence
OCN Digital: Joe Rubin
Films Around the World: Kristen M. Alicea

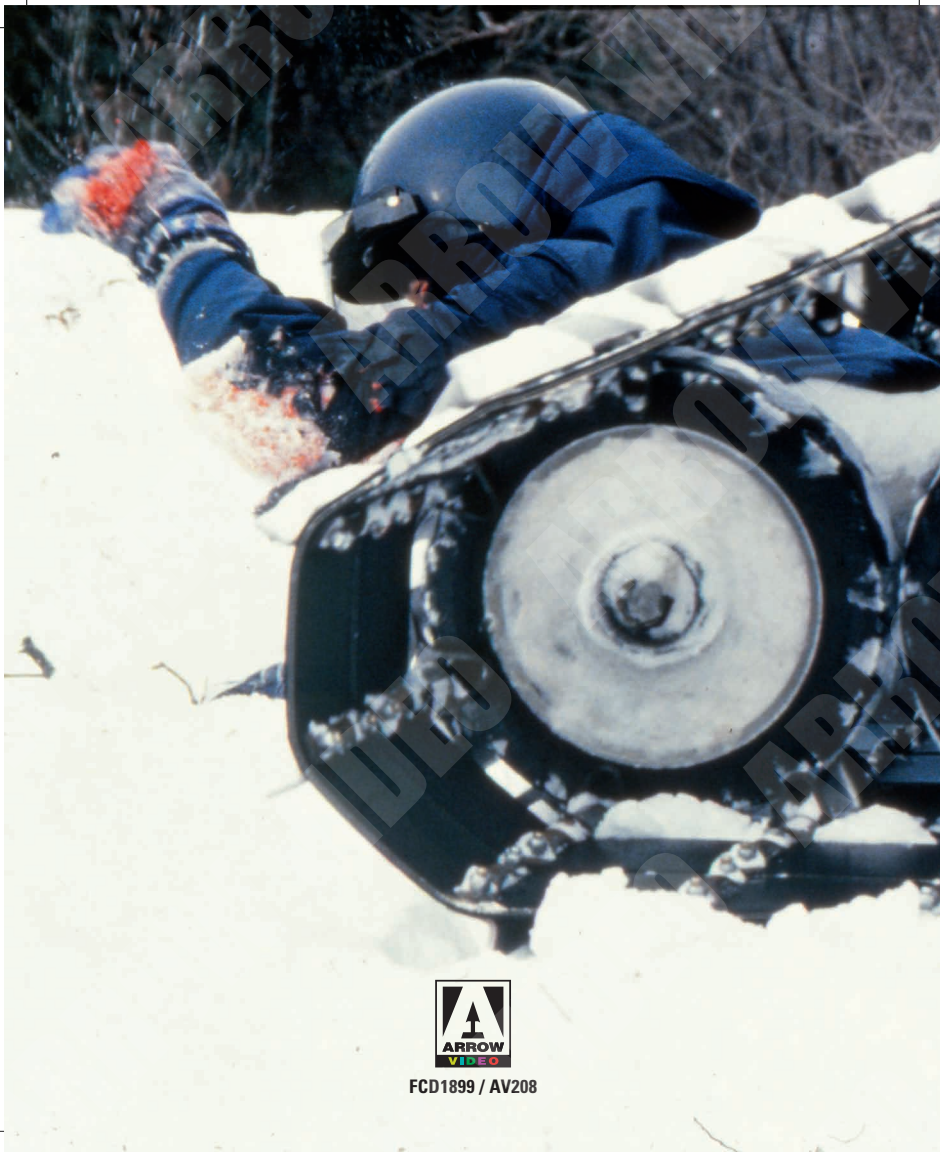
PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and Booklet Produced by **Ewan Cant**
Executive Producers **Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni**
Technical Producer **James White**
Production Assistant **Samuel Thiery**
QC **Nora Mehenni, Alan Simmons**
Blu-ray Mastering and Subtitling **The Engine House Media Services**
Artwork by **Marc Schoenbach**
Design **Obviously Creative**

SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, Hank Carlson, Josh Hadley, Jim Kunz, Gary Paul,
Alexandra Reed and Jeffery Lyle Segal.





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