

Zombies of the Stratosphere (1952, Review)

Published by Steven Tee January 4th, 2010 in MOVIE REVIEWS (ALL) and Movie Reviews 60's. 0 Comments



Director: Fred C. Brannon

Cast: Judd Holdren, Aline Towne, Wilson Wood, Lane Bradford, Stanley Waxman, Leonard Nimoy
 Music Video Distribution & Cheezy Flicks / NTSC Region 1 / Not Rated / Black & White / 1.37:1 Full Screen / English / 167 Minutes

Today's current term for the word "zombie" is defined as a deceased individual who is brought back to life by supernatural forces. You could also toss in some Romero key words in there like cannibalism and apocalyptic. Most of my generation only knows this type of zombie and doesn't realize that George A. Romero only re-innovated the undead. There were two vastly different groups of zombies pre-1968: the voodoo zombie and the automaton. The voodoo zombie, similar to that of the Romero zombie, still resurrects from death but only for objective purposes; in other words, the zombie will do the dirty work for the resurrecting practitioner. You're shit out of luck on this review because we will be discussing the automaton zombie like that from the **Zombies from the Stratosphere**.

Larry Martin works for a United States top secret authority agency and when a mysterious rocket lands on Earth, he takes flight in his rocket suit to investigate. Evil emotionless martians led by Marex plan to set off a nuclear device that will spin the Earth out of control into the darkest voids of space. Their reason for this world ending plan is to save their own planet, Mars, from total atmospheric decay. Larry, along with sidekick Bob, must stop the martians and his lackeys from constructing the device at any cost – even if it means his life. Power boat pursuits, sky high rocket fights and an intense battle against a robot packs this serial full of action, adventure and science fiction.

Does any of this sound familiar? Misery's Annie Wilkes spoke so passionately about the Rocketman serial, "...my favorite was *Rocketman*, and once it was a no breaks chapter. The bad guy stuck him in a car on a mountain road and knocked him out and welded the door shut and tore out the brakes and started him to his death, and he woke up and tried to steer and tried to get out but the car went off a cliff before he could escape! And it crashed and burned and I was so upset and excited, and the next week, you better believe I was first in line. And they always start with the end of the last week. And there was *Rocketman*, trying to get out, and here comes the cliff, and just before the car went off the cliff, he jumped free! And all the kids cheered! But I didn't cheer. I stood right up and started shouting. This isn't what happened last week! Have you all got amnesia? They just cheated us! This isn't fair! HE DID'NT GET OUT OF THE COCK – A – DOODIE CAR!" Well, Annie was right. Somehow, someway Larry managed to wake up just in time to get out of the car, the boat, the plane, etc. to escape his demise. The purpose of serials is to keep you on the edge of your seat until next week's episode, intentionally leaving

out scenes of the heroes courageous escape. I'd like to see a serial where the hero actually does die and would want to see happens next week. That would be better than knowing he would wake up from his short term unconsciousness, jump out of a car going 80 plus mph and living to fight again another day!

There must be some credit given to the early Columbia Pictures' production. The special effects were ahead of its time. I never thought I would be so impressed by an obviously man-in-suit robot. I was in a paralyzed state of awe. Oh, did I mention the rockets? These phallus looking fireworks, I mean rocket ships, sped through the air with such explosive fierceness. The over sized helmet for Larry Martin's rocket suit was a definite aphrodisiac, oh yes! As you may have noticed, all this is satirically sarcastic, but **Zombies of the Stratosphere** is a fun little serial that gives us a throwback look on how martians were perceived before there was **Mars Attacks** or **Independence Day**. Before there was **Rocketman**, there was Larry Martin. This 1952 serial paved the way for many science fiction films to date. You can also thank this serial for giving Leonard Nimoy one of his first acting roles as an automaton alien; without it, there may have never been more unenthusiastic Spock for the **Star Trek** series and films!

The aliens were labeled zombies for their lack of emotions toward Earth and it's inhabitants. Their destructive plan was a bit far-fetched. When they finished the device, I don't even think it could have blown a hole bigger than a in ground swimming pool, but you have to keep in mind the time frame of which this serial was released. In 1952, atomic energy was new and was a big issue and the Cold War was still fresh in the minds of U.S. government officials. And is it any coincidence that the martians whom come from Mars, a red planet, may be referenced to that of Russia whom unofficially labels their army as the red army?

This is a campy little serial that is filled with obsolete everything: acting, special effects, plot, etc. However, one could pull out some entertainment value from this serial as it does have non-stop action and plenty of gunfights. In fact, every episode had a gunfight which then led to the chase which then led to the near death of the hero – very consistent yet very patterned. You'll enjoy it for the cheesiness as the **Zombies from the Stratosphere** come to take over the earth...in a non-cannibalistic kind of way!!!!!!



SHARE AND ENJOY These icons link to social bookmarking sites where readers can share and discover new web pages.



0 Responses to “Zombies of the Stratosphere (1952, Review)”

No Comments