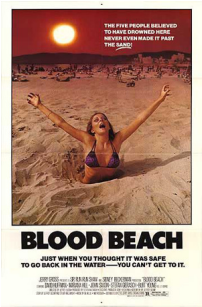
It was a sweaty summer…

The year was 1980…

I was 13 years old and buried under blankets and stuffed in the trunk of my uncle’s car. The reason? I was being smuggled into the drive-in. Panic-riddled and anxious, I was eager to embrace the horror that awaited me. Keep in mind: Back then, seeing an R-rated film was extremely taboo for a wet-behind-the-ears-teenager, and I was so flipping excited that I almost soiled my trousers in anticipation.



It was a double feature, and for the life of me I can’t remember what the first flick was—but who really cares? I was there to see the second feature, a film that would permanently imprint on my always impressionable, horror-craving mind…

That film was BLOOD BEACH.

Yes, BLOOD BEACH, directed by Jeffrey Bloom (who would go on to FLOWERS IN THE ATTIC) and starring several veteran actors like David Huffman, John Saxon (TENEBRAE, A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET) and AMITYVILLE II: THE POSSESSION’s Burt Young. Now, don’t start screaming at me just yet—I know BLOOD BEACH is miles from a masterpiece, but I recall it as a drive-in gem. Back then, everything about BLOOD BEACH played on my youthful fears, and I loved every moment of it. And how could one forget that crazy poster? Gazing at the blonde babe being sucked into the sand petrified me (man, the ’80s really were incredible).

Let’s talk plot.

The premise is quite simple: Several typical beach bums are mysteriously dispatched by an unseen presence. Several gumshoes led by Captain Pearson (Saxon) and Sergeant Royko (Young) painstakingly investigate these disappearances/murders at turtle speed (’80s cops were so oblivious). It takes reunited couple Harry (Huffman) and Catherine (Marianna Hill) to pick up the detectives’ obvious slack, and they discover that something sinister lurks under the beach. Turns out a kind of prehistoric creature that looks like a giant eggplant is the true menace and, in a rapid sting operation that lasts about two minutes, the beast is laid to rest by the trigger-happy cops. Normal beach life swiftly returns and everything is as it should be—or is it…? Mwahaha!

Sounds silly, I know, and for most of the film it is—but what’s more terrifying than funneling beach sand that sucks you in and bites out your crotch: answer that one! And let’s not forget the crazy beach lady who knows the dark secrets of Blood Beach and is the one eyewitness whom no one will listen to because she’s a lunatic. If only we stopped to listen to what the kooks have to say, we’d be better off. Or how about the terrifying beach-cam shots (how scary can a beach’s point of view really be)? Then there’s the yappy dog—yes, the one that ruins your perfect beach getaway—that gets its just desserts. And how can you have a beach-set horror movie without the resident rapist who gets his own comeuppance as the eggplant creature interrupts his attempted sex attack. See? The monster is our friend!

Let us also embrace the gruesome, ketchupy-looking death of the Beverly Hills bimbo who gets hers; there’s always one on the beach, and everybody wishes she would just croak and die and here, she does. And finally, how can one not cheer on the death of the pesky Beach Patrol guy who probably would have confiscated your tequila and written you a citation just to ruin your perfect day. Justice for all!

OK, so unfortunately, after recently revisiting BLOOD BEACH, I’ll admit I can honestly say it wasn’t that great. The gore is minimal, and it’s not scary at all. The acting is horrendous, the dialogue painful and it feels like a half-assed soap opera mashed with T.J. HOOKER with a large vegetable for a villain. A pathetic monster, I might add, that you never get to see until the last five minutes, and then it’s blown to smithereens five seconds later.

I still think one should check out this gem, though, but I would do so with a group of drunken friends and have a good laugh. The excitement of my youthful adventure led me to recall BLOOD BEACH as much more impressive than it was… Maybe fond horror memories are better left in the past. But for cheap thrills, give BLOOD BEACH a whirl. It deserves at least that…and if you want to borrow my copy, just drop me a line.

{jcomments on}