

“THE TERROR WITHIN/DEAD SPACE” (DVD Review)

Written by David Goodfellow

Wednesday, 17 November 2010 15:43



Some cheeses, like sharp Canadian cheddar, improve with age. Others, like late-'80s/early-'90s cheapo ALIEN ripoffs, well...not so much. They might be fun in a forgivable so-bad-it's-good kind of way, but by the measuring stick of contemporary low-budget horror, they often reek like ripe limberger and taste twice as bad.

The latest offering from Shout! Factory's Roger Corman's Cult Classics line gives the distinct impression that they were hitting the bottom of the cracker barrel when they scraped out their latest double feature, consisting of THE TERROR WITHIN (pictured, 1989) and DEAD SPACE (1991). Perhaps they should have considered bundling this DVD with an affordable bottle of wine and a sleeve of saltines in an attempt to make this trying viewing experience more palatable, but there's undoubtedly an audience out there that will appreciate these cheap, goofy creature features for nostalgic reasons alone.



Although these two films are so similar that one review could essentially be a clone of the other, an attempt will be made to somehow treat them as two separate entities. The title of Thierry Notz's THE TERROR WITHIN refers to a man in an ill-fitting rubber monster suit who manages to infiltrate the subterranean lab complex that houses the last vestiges of mankind. A plague has wiped out the rest of the world's population, and a small handful of scientists are working diligently below the Mojave Desert to create a cure that will hopefully enable them to repopulate the Earth.

Coincidentally, there are unexplained creatures (referred to as “gargoyles”) roaming the surface that also have reproduction in mind. They're far more interested in romancing human ladyfolk than their own scabrous kind, leading to events that give the title its second meaning as female bellies begin to swell and little demon babies start to lethally claw their way out of their human

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hosts, only to run amok in the air vents of the complex. And so begins 40 minutes of the scientists creeping around, tracking creatures in vents and occasionally getting knocked around and scratched to death by the beast, which boasts an overbite that makes the Simpsons look like dental superstars.

Top-billed George Kennedy is mercifully dispatched fairly early in the picture, and erotic-thriller staple Andrew Stevens demonstrates that despite the potential end of the world looming overhead, and the constant threat of indestructible buck-toothed beasties crawling around the facility, there's always ample time to blow dry your hair. The filmmakers were unable to ante up enough for any of the female cast to doff their duds or invest in decent gore FX, but the film still earned an R rating thanks to a few colorful words that were just within budget.

The special features accompanying the widescreen transfer are scant, amounting to a handful of trailers. Apparently, co-producer Rodman Flender wound up not being available to participate in an initially announced commentary.

The hits keep on coming with Fred Gallo's *DEAD SPACE*, which takes place in a laboratory on some random planet where scientists are working diligently to create a cure for a virus that is wiping out the world's population. Enter Shane wannabe Commander Kreiger (erotic-thriller staple Marc Singer), accompanied by his faithful robot chum Tinpan, in response to a distress signal sent from the lab. En route to the base, they first had to endure a pathetic unprovoked space attack in a painfully forced but mercifully short sequence cut-and-pasted from Corman's *BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS*, in what has to be the most flaccid attempt to create excitement that this reviewer has ever had the misfortune to witness.

Soon after landing, Krieger finds that the best and brightest have created another virus that caused a rogue mutation, resulting in an indestructible creature that bursts out of its human host and escapes into the air vents. For the second time on one disc, the next 40 minutes are spent with scientists creeping around, tracking the little dickens through air vents (it moves like it's on roller skates) until it takes refuge in a room for its final transformation into a huge latex puppet bearing an unmistakable resemblance to the *ALIENS* Queen, albeit sporting the same hillbilly dentures as those worn by the shuffling stuntman in our first feature. A little more gore than seen in that movie, as well as some nudity provided by *SUBSPECIES*' Laura Tate in a dream-sequence love scene, earn this one its R rating. *DEAD SPACE* is presented in fullscreen, and the special features include the usual trailers, plus a commentary by Gallo in which he makes the standard unapologetic “We did the best we could with what we had to work with” proclamations.

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As a footnote, this sci-foolery deserves a special award for the most misleading cover art and tagline in recent memory: “In The Coldness of Space—Even Hell Freezes Over.” Warning: Not fit for consumption by the lactose-intolerant.

BOTH MOVIES: 🍌🍌👤👤

DVD PACKAGE: 🍌🍌👤👤

{comments on}