



The “Q” Pages from Q to Queen

Q: the WINGED SERPENT

(1982 - aka *Winged Serpent*) writ, prod & dir: Larry Cohen; w/ Michael Moriarty, Candy Clark, David Carradine, Richard Roundtree. One little topless scene; a little mild gore.

A reincarnation of Quetzlcoatl flies around Manhattan and gobbles up window-washers & rooftop sunbathers. In broad daylight. And nobody sees the thing! What sets this apart from the usual monster-formula is an inventive script that’s rich with characters. The film’s central figure is a mousy, small-time hood (played wonderfully by Moriarty) who thinks he’s going to become a big man because he’s the only one who knows where the monster’s nest is. The stop-motion effects are noticeably cheap, but the good characters and an actual story help make up for it. It’s a genuinely fun flick, and a must-see for monster-fans. I don’t think it’s an accident that the film’s last line of dialogue says: “Just an old-fashioned monster.”



QUATERMASS and THE PIT

(1967 - 7 Arts/Hammer - aka *Five Million Years to Earth*; *The Mind Benders*; a feature adaptation of the 1958 TV serial) dir: Roy Ward Baker; w/ James Donald, Andrew Keir, Barbara Shelley, Julian Glover. No skin; no gore.

An archeological dig in the London Underground discovers an ancient spaceship buried in a fossil bed. And although the crew is long since dead, the ship itself carries a psychic



payload that may mean the end of humanity. To be fair, this flick has taken some knocks for being somewhat senseless in spots, meandering in general, and sporting some genuinely crappy sfx animation. The two “heroes” spend most of their time trying to see who can be the most pigheaded, and Barbara Shelley goes through much of the film doing her best “Bambi lost in the woods” impression. Having said that, I also have to say that I actually like this film a lot. The concept is nifty, the spaceship is snazzy, and there’s a certain thrill in the dark tale it tells of the origin of the human species. There’s something almost Lovecraftian about it. It’s a nice story in spite of its flaws, especially if you go into it expecting a cerebral threat, rather than a tangible one.

the QUATERMASS XPERIMENT

(1955 - Hammer - aka *The Creeping Unknown; Shock*) dir: Val Guest; w/ Brian Donlevy, Jack Warner.

Britain sends up a spaceship and it comes down with two crewmen missing and the sole survivor in shock. When the survivor starts absorbing plants and disappears, Professor Quatermass and Scotland Yard team up to track down a mysterious menace from space. An adaptation of an original British TV mini-series, this starts out as an interesting science-mystery with tight scripting -- until you realize that nothing much is actually happening. The plot is pedestrian, the threat depends on one vague hypothesis, and Donlevy’s interpretation of Quatermass is humorless, arrogant, & unsympathetic. Still, it’s fun in an old-fashioned sort of way and was a huge hit at the boxoffice in 1955.



QUEEN OF BLOOD

(1966 - aka *Planet of Blood; The Green Woman; Planet of Terror; Planet of Vampires*) writ & dir: Curtis Harrington; w/ John Saxon, Basil Rathbone, Judi Meredith, Dennis Hopper, Florence Marly, (Forrest Ackerman bit). No skin; no gore.

In the far future of 1990, the first ambassador from another world crash lands on Mars. So, we send up a rocket to rescue her -- and so she starts drinking our blood! If this thing looks a trifle odd, it’s because it was scripted around a series of special fx miniatures scenes ripped off from a Soviet science fiction film (you can even see the red star on some of the spaceships). The borrowed footage and the emphasis on “futuristic” sets & costumes lend this thing an air of silliness. However, thanks to a fairly intelligent script and a strong cast, this flick just barely manages to succeed, in spite of its



dorky looks and crippling low budget. Get your spookiness and your silliness all in one movie -- such a deal.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS

(1947) prod & dir: Edward F. Finney; w/ Robert Lowery, Patricia Morison, J. Edward Bromberg.

Her sweetie disappears in the jungle, so she organizes a safari to go look for him. This flick would be more properly titled Queen of the Stock Footage. The plot is thin as smoke and has the cast wandering across two continents for the sole purpose of displaying as much old travelogue footage as humanly possible. The dialogue is half-witted and the script takes up only about 15 minutes in between the recycled footage... oh, yes; there are some white babes in the jungle -- therefore, "amazons" -- they get less screen time than the cute monkey -- oog. Easy to heckle, but that's its only virtue.



QUEEN OF OUTER SPACE

(1958) dir: Edward Bernds; w/ Zsa Zsa Gabor, Eric Fleming, Paul Birch.

Definitely one of the "So bad it's good" variety. This way-cheap attempt at a sci-fi drama (with the usual dry, sexist night-club humor) has a bunch of heroes flung onto Venus to battle the evil Queen. Gabor isn't the queen but is our heroine, the courageous leader of the native resistance. Um, yah. Part of what makes this thing so funny is that they play such a ridiculous premise (not to mention the sets & costumes) so straight. However, it really needs the MST3K treatment -- it seems as if the entire movie consists of five scenes, each padded & stretched to their absolute maximum length. There is one shot of our heroes crouching in the bushes, hiding from unseen "electronic scanners" -- I swear it goes on for a full three minutes -- they all just squat behind a bush and cringe every few seconds as an annoying buzz flies over their heads. It's what a friend of mine would call a "six-packer" -- be sure to bring your favorite beverage.

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Icon Glossary:



Good Stinker -- These are the films where a good deal of the entertainment comes from filmmaking incompetence; fun to watch in spite of themselves.



Goopy Gore -- These films exhibit distinctly above-normal quantities of unpleasantly abused body parts.



Naughty Nudie -- Films with this flag feature frequent and/or explicit nudity (almost always female) beyond that normally found in your average T&A flick.



Butt Stompin' -- These films feature at least one superior violent fight or shootout scene that will get the testosterone pumping.



Gold Star -- These are the flicks that I felt reached above their expectations or at least pleasantly surprised me; they may not always be actually good flicks, but I did find something in them worthwhile.



Blue Max Medal of Really Goodness -- These are flicks that I not only enjoyed, but I think are actually quite good films (not always the same thing).



Lethal Cinema -- These wretched viewing experiences go beyond being merely bad to become genuine sources of pain and regret; they should be avoided by all but the most masochistic trash cinema veterans. Don't say I didn't warn you.