



The “XYZ” Pages from X to Zontar

the X FROM OUTER SPACE

See the Godzilla page.

X - THE MAN WITH X-RAY EYES

(1963) prod & dir: Roger Corman; w/ Ray Milland, Diana van der Vlis, Harold J. Stone, John Hoyt, Don Rickles.

Searching for better medical tools, a doctor invents eyedrops that give him x-ray vision. But he learns that seeing *everything* can be a horror. The scene where he walks into a party and discovers that he can see through everyone’s clothes is hilarious, but the general tone of the movie is depressing. The x-effect increases, and what becomes of you when you can see through everything? Rickles has a terrific role as the carnie huckster who tries to cash in on the doctor’s “gift.” Dimmed a bit by low-budget fx, this is still a decent little flick.



X THE UNKNOWN

(1956 -- Hammer) dir: Leslie Norman; w/ Dean Jagger, Leo McKern, Willam Lucas, Edward Chapman (Anthony Newley & Michael Ripper in small roles).

This is Hammer’s attempt to capitalize on the success of the Quatermass films, but first-time scriptwriter Jimmy Sangster shows quite a few errors. Although nicely done & kinda fun, it’s weak in concept & execution. It turns out the Scottish countryside is plagued by... well, a glop of radioactive sentient mud from the center of the Earth. The “monster” is destroyed in the end by a completely unexplained piece of technology. It was worthwhile, however, just to see a *young* Leo McKern.

XCHANGE

(2000 - Canada) dir: Allan Moyle; w/ Stephen Baldwin, Pascale Bussieres, Kim Coates, Kyle Maclachlan. A little skin; no gore.

In the near future, business travelers will make quick trips to distant cities by swapping minds with a host body at their destination. So of course, some dumb schmuck is going to get his body stolen by a terrorist and then he'll have to steal the body of a super-strong clone to go hunting his real body (and stop an evil corporate conspiracy at the same time). Except it'll actually be sort of dull, so everyone will have to have random gratuitous sex to spice things up. It's covered with a sci-fi glaze and topped with some T&A bon-bons, but underneath, it's just pimento loaf. Most everything about the movie is competent but merely adequate -- except for the dull photography and the utterly failed attempt at making three dimensional characters. It doesn't suck, but damn near anything you can think of would be a better way to spend your next 90 minutes.



X-TREME FIGHTER

See the Cynthia Rothrock pages.

X-TRO

(1983 - Britain) writ, music & dir: Harry Bromley Davenport; w/ Philip Sayer, Bernice Stegers, Danny Brainin, Maryam D'Abo. A little skin; a teeny bit o' gore.

Um, um -- let's see -- dull British guy is abducted & mutated by aliens, years later he returns (by a most unusual method) and turns his son into an alien. Sort of. Kinda. There's a lot of interesting psycho-sexual, gooey stuff here, but none of it hangs together very well. A classic case of nifty ideas without a proper story. Still, it's fun despite the many boring bits -- they are thoughtful enough to throw in alien rapists, belly bursting, malicious midgets, killer toys, and Maryam D'Abo's boobies. There are plenty of oddball moments, if you don't mind the absence of a script.



X-TRO 2: The Second Encounter

(1991 - Canada) dir: Harry Bromley-Davenport; w/ Jan-Michael Vincent, Paul Koslo, Tara Buckman. No skin; mildest gore.



An underground government lab (just like the one in *Andromeda Strain*) sends the first explorers into a parallel universe. Only one of them comes back, but out of her belly bursts a terrible monster (just like the one in *Alien*); and the commandos attack (just like in *Aliens*). Oh well, I think you get the picture -- this flick avoids originality with an almost religious fervor. Basically, it's just Cut & Paste using *Alien*, *Aliens*, and *Predator* -- with about 1% the budget and even less talent. Sometimes the low budget is amusingly apparent, such as the utility ladder in the ventilation shaft that is very obviously just a K-Mart extension ladder duct-taped to the wall. But that's about the only real entertainment offered here.



the YAKUZA WAY

(1999) writ & dir: Shundo Ohkawa; w/ Riki Takeuchi, Eugene Nomura, Maya Hoshino, George Kee Cheung. One little flash o' skin; no gore.

Mr. Honorable Yakuza Guy comes to Los Angeles to make a buy from the Mexican Mob. When they betray him and off his girlfriend, it's goodbye Mexican Mob. It's not even remotely original, seriously slow in spots, dang silly in others, and way too impressed with itself and its star. Still, if you can get past Takeuchi's ludicrously stereotyped "tough-guy" characterization, this is still an enjoyable flick. The music is decent, the cast is good, and there are some nifty action scenes. It is well filmed, it's just a rather artless & ordinary.



YEAR OF THE YAHOO

(1972) prod & dir: Hershel Gordon Lewis; w/ Claude King, Ray Sager, Ronna Riddle. Teensy bit o' skin; no gore.

A Country-Western singer becomes a puppet of the political machine when he's picked to run for the senate against a powerful incumbent. His girlfriend doesn't like him being a pawn who says only what they tell him to, so she pouts and then gets raped. The plot, concerned mostly with the cynical and manipulative campaign managers, is wandering and empty. They squeeze in a couple half-



hearted attempts at sleaze, and then there's something vaguely resembling an ending, I think. Sager sinks his teeth into the role of the slimy video director, but he just doesn't have what it takes to save this bloodless sludge. A waste of time for all concerned.

YES, MADAM

See the Cynthia Rothrock page.

YOG, THE MONSTER FROM SPACE

See Space Amoeba on the Godzilla page.

YONGARY: Monster from the Deep

(1967 - So. Korea) dir: Kim Ki-Duk (Yungsung Suh); w/ Yungil Oh, Chungim Nam.

South Korea wanted their own home-grown version of Godzilla and, to be honest, it's no worse than some of the Godzilla flicks. First, we get some utterly nonessential drivel about the Korean space program, and then an earthquake travels halfway around the world only to reveal itself in Korea as a Big Rubber-Suit Monster who seems to rip off both Godzilla and Gamera -- he torches buildings, stomps on tanks, and learns to disco. Thank goodness Korea also has its own version of the obnoxious little brat who figures out how to fight the monster. They make a respectable stab at the special effects (within the expectations of the genre), but the script is just a muddled patchwork of Kaiju clichés -- which is probably just as well, since the cast certainly isn't up to anything resembling acting. But it's rarely boring and there's plenty of dumb fun to fill out a matinee bill with the kids.



YONGGARY (1999) aka 2001 Yonggary

See Reptilian.



ZARDOZ

(1974) writ, prod & dir: John Boorman; w/ Sean Connery, Charlotte Rampling, Sara Kestelman, John Alderton. A tidbit o' skin; no gore.

In the bleak future, a violent barbarian breaks into the protected haven of the spoiled elites -- he is captured and studied, but will it be the barbarian or the perfect society that gets dissected? Okay, this flick makes its way onto everyone's list of "crappy" films -- but I confess, I've always gotten a kick out of it -- it's just *screwy*. Sure it's stuffed to the gills with social allegory and sexual paranoia, but with all the wackiness going on, who's going to notice, let alone take the time to analyze? We start with a gang of primitive killers & rapists who worship a floating stone head that proclaims, "The gun is good, the penis is evil." Then we get to the land of psychic snobs, the advanced seminar on applied pornography, assault by meditation, and higher education through copulation. How can you not have fun with stuff like this? It's a bizarre and, yes, heavily flawed film, but I still think it's a gas.



ZARKORR! THE INVADER

(1996) dir: Aaron Osborne; w/ Rhys Pugh, De'Prise Grossman, Mark Hamilton. No skin; no gore.

A giant monster emerges from a mountain in California! A tiny fairy girl tells a hapless postman that he is the only hope to save humanity! And she also informs him there is no afterlife -- which, I suppose, was the screenwriter's stab at socio-religious relevance. Full Moon studio does round-eye Kaiju -- and doesn't quite get it right. There are a few seconds of nice footage of a guy in a monster suit trashing toy buildings, but aside from those interruptions, the film tries to be a satirical comedy about the clueless nebbish trying to save the planet. The attempt is tiresome. The script & characters are less engaging than a can of white paint, they are nowhere near as funny as they apparently believe themselves to be, and aside from the guy in the rubber suit, I don't see a lot of hard work on this thing. Even for the most desperate giant monster fan, this is just too much of a chore to sit through.



BAD CINEMA DIARY

the TALE OF ZATOICHI (*Zatoichi 1*)

(1962 - Japan) dir: Kenji Misumi; w/ Shintaro Katsu, Masayo Banri.

Wandering feudal Japan, blind Ichi pretends to be a bumbling, innocent masseur, but people soon learn that he is a sharp gambler and a phenomenal swordsman. In an unusual twist for a chanbara hero, Zatoichi is rude, unkempt, and a staunch individualist. He was also popular enough to spawn an endless string of sequels and rip-offs. Ichi is like a calm boat in a raging sea, cutting a swath with his compassion and integrity, and occasionally his blade. In this first film, Ichi finds himself as a tool in a war between rival Yakuza gangs, but befriends the ailing samurai who has been hired to help the other side. He has only two very quick fights in this movie, the bulk of the film explores Ichi's sense of purpose and justice amid a cesspool of corruption and exploitation. Although more of a character drama than an action flick, it never wanders far from the genre expectations and provides the usual bad men and ironic comeuppances.



ZOLTAN, HOUND OF DRACULA

(1978 - aka *Dracula's Dog*) dir: Albert Band; w/ Michael Pataki, Reggie Nalder, Jose Ferrer. No skin; no gore.

In Romania, the dumbest soldier on the planet pulls a stake out of the wrong corpse and all of a sudden there's a vampire dog. The blood-sucking hound then goes to California to hunt down his old master's last descendant. Okay, the real star of this flick is one superbly trained pooch; next to that performance, the bipedal cast looks pathetic. There are a few outlandishly cheesy moments in here that are a lot of fun, but thanks to Band's penchant for long, dull scenes accompanied by even duller music, this thing is a sleeping pill. I suppose it's nice for dog-loving vampire groupies, but even *their* eyes will likely glaze over.



ZOMBIE

(1979 - Italy - aka *Zombi 2; Island of the Flesh Eaters; Island of the Living Dead*) dir: Lucio Fulci; w/ Tisa Farrow, Ian McCulloch, Richard Johnson. A little skin; a little explicit gore.



A young lady searching for her missing father finds a remote Caribbean island being swamped by a plague of zombies. It's not exactly original, deriving a lot of inspiration from Romero's films, but it is quite well done and has become a genre classic. It stands out as having good suspense and an actual story, rather than relying on endless streams of gore. It also sports a few outstanding scenes, including a stunning (even if absurd) fight between a zombie and a shark. It's a good deal more fun than the usual zombie movie.

ZOMBIE LAKE

(1981 - France/Spain - aka *Lake of the Living Dead*) dir: J. A. Laser (& Jean Rollin); w/ Howard Vernon, Pierre Escourrou, Anouchka. Lotsa nudies; no gore.

An idyllic lake in France is infested with soggy Nazi zombies who lumber about sucking the blood of local babes. Now, throw yourself into a freight car full of fresh manure and take a few deep breaths -- that's this movie in a nutshell. This stunningly bad film begins nicely enough with full-frontal nudity during the opening credits, but then hits us with lame attempts at horror, lousy makeup fx, acting on par with the vegetable kingdom, and music so bad it could cause emotional scarring. The tale apparently takes place just ten years after the war, but no attempt is made to use vintage clothing or cars. And if this bone-jarring celebration of incompetence isn't enough to weird you out, wait 'till you get to the meat of the story -- which involves a young war orphan who is so happy that her bloodsucking daddy-zombie has returned to her. oog. Perhaps knowing what a turd of a flick they were making, the filmmakers tried to fill it with plenty of nude French bimbos -- oh Lord, it doesn't help -- the flick still sucks. An eerie example of just how badly a movie can be made.



ZOMBIE HOLOCAUST

(1980 - Italy - aka *Queen of the Cannibals; Zombie 3; Dr. Butcher M.D.; Medical Deviate*) dir: Frank Martin (aka Marino Girolami); w/ Ian McCulloch, Alexandra Delli Colli, Sherry Buchanan, Peter O'Neal. Some skin; some gore.

Getting chased through the jungle by famished cannibals just wasn't enough for this expedition, so they run smack into a mad doctor brewing up zombies for the sake of science...



and then the cannibals paint flowers on a naked lady. (!?...). Anyhow, the flick does deliver the promised exploitation gimmicks, but the script is recycled hash and the effects are cheap (some of them laughably so). It's a careless and hasty production that apparently hoped to cash in on both the cannibal and the zombie craze (although the zombies in this flick never actually do anything). However, the cannibals are enthusiastic (if not actually scary), there's some involuntary brain surgery, and it features an Italian lady who kindly strips at every available opportunity.

This was introduced in America as *Dr. Butcher M.D.* with completely unrelated zombie footage from a failed film project tacked on to the beginning.



ZOMBIE ISLAND MASSACRE

(1984) dir: John N. Carter; w/ David Broadnax (also producer & scripter), Rita Jenrette, Tom Cantrell, Diane Clayre Holub. Tidbit o' skin; mildest gore.

A boatload of tourists on a Caribbean island are hunted down by mysterious killers -- yup, that's about it. It does get a boost from decent locations and a fairly good cast -- but it also has a dull script, a paltry budget, and it completely lacks actual gore or zombies, and there's not even any nudity past the first ten minutes. It finally guarantees its failure by actually attempting to be a serious movie (in contrast to later advertising, which tried to sell it as "campy"). To be fair, it doesn't suck, it's just studiously mediocre.



BAD CINEMA DIARY

the ZOMBIES OF MORA TAU

(1957 – aka *The Dead That Walk*) dir: Edward Cahn; w/ Gregg Palmer, Allison Hayes, Autumn Russell, Morris Ankrum, Marjorie Eaton.

Zombies guard a sunken treasure ship and kill all who come near; so of course we get the usual bag of numbskulls who think they can outwit walking corpses. Meanwhile, the old lady says spooky stuff and Allison Hayes gets zombie-fied. It's dime-budget and full of cheese and the zombie makeup consists of seaweed draped over their shoulders. But the script moves along nicely, the cast is good (especially Eaton as the spooky granny), and there's plenty of silly fun with soggy zombies. It makes a fine enough guilty pleasure.



ZOMBIES ON BROADWAY

(1945) dir: Gordon Douglas; w/ Wally Brown, Alan Carney, Bela Lugosi, Anne Jeffreys, Sheldon Leonard.

A low-budget 'B' vehicle for the lackluster comedy duo of Brown & Carney. Two dopey press agents try to dig up a *real* zombie for a night club opening and thus fall afoul of the mad scientist (guess who). There are a few chuckles, but they're outnumbered by the clichéd gags and racial stereotypes.

ZONE 39

(1997 - Australia) dir: John Tatoulis; w/ Peter Phelps, Carolyn Bock. A teensy bit o' skin; no gore.

In the nearly destroyed post-World War 3 world, a giant corporation has taken over and enforces peace between the two major factions -- at the cost of controlling everyone's lives. One burnt out soldier who lost his wife to the system



gets sent to a remote outpost. There, he and the drug-enhanced memories of his dead wife uncover a terrible conspiracy by the corporation -- and not only has he no one to trust, but his mind keeps slipping in & out of hallucinations about his wife. This flick is remarkably well made and I really wanted to like it better. But when it comes right down to it, the script is inherently undramatic and the story really doesn't get going until the last fifteen minutes. There's only so much pretty desert landscape and nostalgic dream sequences that one can stand before giving up hope that an actual plot will ever surface. If this flick had content as well as talent, it might have been pretty nifty.

ZONTAR, THE THING FROM VENUS

(1966) dir: Larry Buchanan; w/ John Agar, Susan Bjurman, Anthony Houston, Patricia DeLaney.

A crazy scientist, a sane-but-dull scientist, their nagging wives, and a con-artist from Venus. Somewhere in the universe at some point in time, some benighted soul thought it was a good idea to re-edit the script for *It Conquered the World* to make it as cheesy as humanly possible, play it with a cast devoid of any shred of talent, and do all that on a budget that stretched only far enough to buy the 16mm film

stock. Agar fills in for Graves and the terrible turnip is replaced by a guy in an astonishingly bad mutant costume. What you get is a long period of dullness highlighted by frequent moments of alarming incompetence. Buchanan and Agar both have a hefty load of stinkers to their credit -- but this one makes the rest look good.



ZORRO'S BLACK WHIP

See the Serials page.

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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.