

HOPELESSLY DEVOTED TO 80S MOVIES

GIRLS. ON FILM CREATURE FEATURES



E.T. | THE THING | HARRY & THE WENDERSONS | THE MONSTER SQUAD
THE FLY | SORORITY BABES IN THE SLIMEBALL BOWL-O-RAMA
LABYRINTH | BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED

ISSUE 14 • OCTOBER 2021 • GIRLSONFILMZINE.COM

GIRLS, ON FILM

CREATURE FEATURES

E.T.	5
THE THING	8
LABYRINTH	11
THE FLY	14
HARRY AND THE HENDERSONS	17
THE MONSTER SQUAD	20
BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED	23
SORORITY BABES IN THE SLIMEBALL BOWL-O-RAMA.....	25
ENDNOTES	28



PRESENTING... GHOULS, ON FILM

Welcome to *Girls, on Film* is the fanzine that is hopelessly devoted to 80s movies! Each issue covers eight movies related to a particular theme. We are now at 13 issues and 104 movies about music, sports, summer, food, the workplace, role reversals, entertainers, animation, robots, road trips, adaptations, reporters, and high school.

In this issue, we're talking about 80s Creature Features: Good and bad aliens, sassy imps, big foot, bugs, fantasy land creatures, classic monsters, and even robots.

CREATURES IN THIS ISSUE

E.T. (1982) A young boy befriends an extra-terrestrial stranded on Earth and vows to help it find its way home, but first they have to escape the government forces out to capture the alien.

The Thing (1982) Something wicked this way comes. A remote research facility is infiltrated by an alien that perfectly mimics the crew.

Labyrinth (1986) A young girl has to complete a labyrinth to save her baby brother from David Bowie and his goblins.

The Fly (1986) Jeff Goldblum and Geena Davis are stuck in a science fiction romance nightmare. Be afraid...be very afraid.

Harry and the Hendersons (1986) John Lithgow saves a sasquatch from a murderous bigfoot hunter.

The Monster Squad (1987) Pre-teen horror fanatics use their monster knowledge to save their town from Dracula and his ugly ghoulfriends.

Batteries Not Included (1987) A family of small flying saucers tries to prevent gentrification in lower Manhattan.

Sorority Babes in the Slimeball Bowl-O-Rama (1988) Sorority babes banish a trio of peeping toms on pledge night to a haunted bowling alley where they discover a sassy, wish-granting imp.

BEHIND THE ZINES

STEPHANIE MCDEVITT CO-FOUNDER/CO-EDITOR

Stephanie's one big disappointment in life is that she wasn't old enough to fully appreciate popular clothing styles in the 1980s, as she was mostly attired in paisley sweatsuits. A full-time editor and occasional freelancer, Stephanie looks nostalgically back on '80s films such as *Ernest Goes to Camp*, *Adventures in Babysitting*, and *Can't Buy Me Love* and wishes she could pull off the hairdos of Cindy Mancini and her friends.

JANENE SCELZA CO-FOUNDER/CO-EDITOR

Janene is no stranger to zines - she's made plenty of the them over the years. She spent a hefty part of her teens combing musty video stores and public libraries for all the '80s movies she could find. There were lists! Janene's got plenty of favorites from the decade, but it's stylish indie films like *Desperately Seeking Susan*, *Repo Man*, and *The Terminator* that she loves best.

DR. RHONDA BAUGHMAN CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Rhonda, a teacher and freelance writer, raised adolescent hell in the '80s and the horror films of that era were her BFFs! She loves all of '80s pop culture, but nothing spoke to her quite like *Sorority Babes in the Slimeball Bowl-O-Rama*, *Nightmare Sisters*, and *Reform School Girls*. She had a pink laminated Video Time Video rental card at 9 years old and she never looked back. Or forward, really; she still loves her VHS

and sweet, sweet VCR. And let it be known: the scrunchie never died for Rhonda: she STILL wears one proudly!

MATT SCELZA CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Matt loves to dissect and analyze everything. He is stoked to join his sister, Janene, for two essays in this issue. He logged a lot of hours at the same video stores and public library film collections with Janene in search of odd and unusual titles. However, he's got too many favorites to name.

JESSICA MACLEISH GUEST WRITER

Jessica MacLeish is a Veronica, not a Heather. She's also a writer, editor, and late 80s baby who loves watching, thinking about, talking about, and writing about movies.

LILYANN FOSTER GUEST WRITER

Lily, a freelance writer, a film studies grad student, and no stranger to zines as the co-editor of her own music zine. Lily loves films from all ages but has a special place in her heart for the iconic look and practical effects of '80s films. From the raging replicants in *Blade Runner*, the comical whit of *Mystery Science Theater 3000* and crazy Cronenberg and Carpenter sci-fi flicks, Lily gorges on everything absurd and strange the '80s has to offer.



“MOM, IT WAS REAL, I SWEAR!”

E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL

BY JESSICA MACLEISH

Now, I know what you’re thinking—is *E.T.* really a “creature feature”? It’s not technically part of the horror genre, which creature features typically are, but as it is science-fiction and features a creature at its core (and in its title), the Powers That Be at Girls, on Film have generously allowed me to tackle it for our Creature Feature issue. So here we are!

The creature in question is none other than a sweet extra-terrestrial called E.T. by his human friend Elliott. E.T. is a curious, homesick alien who captured moviegoers’ (and critics’) hearts and minds when the film first hit theaters in June 1982 (after first premiering at Cannes Film Festival as the closing film in May of the same year [1]). Upon wide release, *E.T.* hit blockbuster status quickly, eventually surpassing *Star Wars* as the highest grossing film of all time (until

another Spielberg-helmed flick, *Jurassic Park*, broke that record 11 years later) [2]. *E.T.* received nine Academy Award nominations, including one for Best Picture [3], and was added to the Library of Congress’ National Film Registry, for films deemed “culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant” in 1994 [4].

It’s such a classic, and anecdotally beloved by so many, that it feels daunting to write about it now, nearly 40 years later. Quotes from the movie have embedded themselves into our cultural lexicon. Its imagery, like the movie poster image of a silhouetted Elliott and E.T. riding the flying bicycle in front of a full moon, or E.T.’s glowing finger, feels iconic, at least to the generation(s) that came of age in the United States in the 80s and soon after.



Almost 40 years later it remains a heartwarming story and beautifully shot movie—even if the special effects seem rudimentary now, I still felt overwhelmed witnessing the movie magic of Elliott and E.T. flying across the night sky as the music swelled. The story, the acting, the score, they all come together to tug at the heartstrings, and all the accolades and acclaim aside, it's the universal themes of *E.T.* that make it resonate—themes of loneliness, friendship, communication, and more.

At its root, it's a movie about connection, about finding a person (or extra-terrestrial) who understands you in a world (or universe) where it's easy to feel alienated. It's also about doing the best you can, ingenuity and creativity, a mistrust of authority figures, and the deliciousness of Reese's Pieces. Extremely relatable.

Upon rewatch, *E.T.* captured my full attention from the first few scenes; it's hard to look away from the cinematography, the action, the excitement, and the worry mixed with fear mixed with a near-immediate concern for the well-being of both E.T. (chased by some adults in the woods and left behind by the spaceship) and Elliott (who's clearly the outsider on his older brother Michael's game night).

Elliott's first face-to-face encounter with E.T. mimics a tried-and-true horror trope: they appear to be in a field of wheat—or corn?—at night. The movie also takes place around Halloween, lots of scenes occur during a foggy nighttime, and the music cues often imply something sinister is on the horizon. It's 1982, so these kids are primed for some alien interaction: the first two *Star Wars* installments had already wowed film audiences (note the kid dressed as Yoda on Halloween night); there are aliens on TV and science-fiction in the

newspaper comics; and Michael is wearing a *Space Invaders* video game T-shirt when he first meets E.T.

Despite the horror-esque touches, a population on the pop culture lookout for alien activity and/or invasion, and E.T.'s sometimes alarming noises, it becomes clear that the scary in *E.T.* isn't the creature inside the house—it's the menacing government search party outside of it, the ones eavesdropping on the neighborhood and hunting for E.T., the ones who roll up to the Taylor's house in full NASA astronaut suits, all too ready to cart E.T.'s body off for further examination and experimentation when he appears to die. They're the real invaders here.

And E.T., the creature at the center of it all, is a creature feature star who comforts his new human friend, who revitalizes a pot of flowers and heals cuts, who feels kinda human. E.T. throws a baseball, eats junk food, watches TV! And, perhaps the most “human” thing of all (not that we should be so arrogant; clearly animals and extra-terrestrials feel, too)—cares for Elliott, Michael, and Gertie.

Elliott and E.T. form a special bond, one so deep Elliott gets drunk when E.T. drinks beer, even though they're in completely different locations. They feel each other's feelings, and it seems that knowing and caring for E.T. instills in Elliott a deeper appreciation and concern for other living creatures, as well—if his freeing of all the soon-to-be-dissected frogs in science class is any indication.

It's a true friendship, one that comforts both during a moment in time when that comfort is sorely needed—E.T. because he's stranded on Earth alone, Elliott because he's missing his father and feels isolated among his peers/older brother's friends. Neither one truly feels at home at the moment when they meet; E.T. is quite literally far from home, while Elliott's home has changed drastically due to his parents' separa-

tion. His mom is harried, juggling three kids, a dog, and a job, and Elliott misses his dad's presence as well as the things they used to do together, like go to ball games. It's this homesickness and longing for understanding and connection that brings Elliott and E.T. together.

E.T. showcases what we might typically think of as the “humanity” of another, non-human creature (and to E.T., perhaps the reverse is true—Elliott's a non-extra-terrestrial whose extra-terrestrial-ness, whatever that may mean to E.T., shows itself, endearing him to E.T.). E.T. and Elliott's friendship emphasizes to us humans watching at home the importance of connection—and that maybe we aren't so special after all. Maybe there are human-like aliens out there. Maybe we should all be a little more like Elliott—welcoming, accepting, loving.

In the end, of course, E.T. has to go, and Elliott has to stay, despite the entreaties both make for the other to “come” or “stay.” But it's clear they've helped each other through their bond, a bond neither will forget any time soon. E.T. has learned about Earth (and actually, if his home planet was initially trying to info-gather, he's going home with a LOT of Earthly details to share) and Elliott helped save his life, while Elliott—though all his problems aren't solved, since his dad is still “in Mexico”—seems to feel a little less alone in the world. Heck, by the end of the movie, he's even leading the group of Michael's friends on an epic chase, the same group that treated him like a pesky lackey at the beginning of the movie. Things have changed, and because of the wildest adventure imaginable—an alien encounter.

It was real, Elliott. And I, for one, am grateful we got to see it play out on screen.



MASTER OF DISGUISE

THE THING

BY JANENE SCELZA & MATT SCELZA

John Carpenter's excellent 1982 science fiction horror is a feature with many creatures. *The Thing* is not one thing, it is many things. It can be anything. And in the end, it may be everything.

It is a parasitic alien that attacks and mimics its animal and human hosts. Thawed after hundreds of thousands of years in frozen hibernation, it infiltrates a team of American research scientists stationed in remote Antarctica. One by one, the men are taken over by the mysterious creature ala Agatha Christie's *...And Then There Were None*. The ensemble cast, including Wilford Brimley and Keith David, is led by Carpenter's frequent star, Kurt Russell, who plays reluctant hero, RJ McCready.

It is the perfect setup for a monster movie: the

alien has no identity of its own. The men can only speculate about its existence and reach. All they know for sure is that it's an intelligent shapeshifter that can do some really scary shit. And that's really all you need because the story is as much about the growing tension between the men as it is about man vs. monster. Allegiances are tested. Paranoia runs rampant. Who can you trust? Who can trust you?

The film never shows us all of the cards. By the end, we don't know who is real and who is imitation. Their assimilation isn't obvious like, say, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, where the replicas were totally devoid of human emotion. Purity in *The Thing* can be tested in the blood, but the experiment is sabotaged.

Moreover, the story does not originate with the



DOGGED BY PROBLEMS.



DISCOVERING THE LANDING SITE.



THE SHAPESHIFTER'S SILVER BULLET.



TAKING CRAZY EFFECTS TO NEW HEIGHTS.

Americans; the nightmare has already played out somewhere else. Within minutes of the film's opening, there is an explosion and a shoot-out as two Norwegians approach the research station in a helicopter trying to snipe a sled dog. Their erratic behavior baffles the Americans. One Norwegian blows himself up and the other, totally unphased, continues on foot after the dog. He shouts something at the Americans, but they don't speak the language. He accidentally shoots one of the Americans. They fire in self-defense. It doesn't matter; the alien is already among them. (A 2011 prequel — for some reason, also called *The Thing* — tells the Norwegian's story, as if, 30-some years after Carpenter's version, that story — essentially the same story — was necessary).

The commitment to the mystery is one of the things we love about this movie. And, thankfully, this isn't one of those creative properties where those involved come back years later to affirm the fan theories (looking at you, Ridley Scott). To spoil it for *The Thing* would go against the whole grain of the movie, anyways.

That's not to say that the boogymen lives entirely in the dark. There are several gooey, gross instances of the alien in mid-transformation. Richard Masur discovers an amalgamation of canine parts. Charles Hallahan's chest bares teeth and bites off Richard Dysart's arms, and then Hallahan's decapitated head sprouts spider legs and scurries away while the men — and audience — look totally dumbfounded.

The film's special effects are some of the decade's most memorable. Revisiting *The Thing* makes us nostalgic for the *Movie Magic* TV series on the Discovery Channel in the mid-90s, which went behind the scenes to show how (mostly) pre-CGI effects were done and featured this movie.

The critics in 1982 hated this movie, citing in part the jarring special effects. Roger Ebert even referred to it as a “barf-bag movie.” The film certainly went well beyond the chest-bursting scene that shocked audiences watching *Alien* (1979) a few years earlier.

The painstaking practical effects were the work of damn lucky 23-year old artist Rob Bottin, the guy responsible for Tim Curry’s amazing look in the 1985 fantasy film, *Legend* (revived for several Match.com commercials last year). He reportedly toiled for a year to exhaustion building models and ingenious rigs and then famously argued with cinematographer Dean Cundey about how they should be lit [1].

The Thing was the second film adapted from John W. Campbell’s novella *Who Goes There?* (published in 1938 under the pen name Don Stuart). The first of these — Howard Hawks’s *The Thing From Another World* — was much more of a classic monster movie. The crew kill a hulking alien-man creature and take to the airwaves to warn the world to “watch the skies, referencing “the gathering Communist storm — and existential threat of that era — by echoing the American response to it” [2].

The 1982 film had been in development since the mid-70s. Carpenter was in and then he was out and then he was in again after several drafts of the script failed to go anywhere. He and screenwriter Bill Lancaster (son of Hollywood legend Burt) opted for a more faithful telling of Campbell’s story, where an unknown entity could perfectly assimilate itself to other beings [3].

This decision mirrored a significant shift in American politics. “The 1982 remake of *The Thing* spoke solemnly to audiences of the mistrust inherent when individuals, charged with the responsibility of working together as a functioning unit, drop all semblance of so-called ‘civilized’ society [4]. Coincidentally, *The Thing* was also released about a year after the first

clinically reported case of AIDS in the United States [5].

The Thing is widely celebrated today (it is one of Matt’s all-time favorite movies), but it took a while to find an audience. The reviews were so bad, Cinefantastique asked on the cover of its issue that year whether *The Thing* was the most hated movie. Test audiences, not surprisingly, hated the open-ended finale and nihilistic tone. Americans were knee-deep in another recession and weren’t looking for movies of misery. The special effects were considered too shocking.

Most of all, the film was up against some stiff competition for science fiction and horror films back in good ol’ 1982. *Blade Runner* was released the same weekend. *Poltergeist* hit theaters earlier that month, and a very different alien was crowned king of the box office: *E.T.* It was so bad that Universal would eventually buy Carpenter out of his multi-picture contract and send him packing. His next film was also about a very different kind of alien: *Starman* (1984).

In an article dissecting common characteristics of John Carpenter’s films, No Film School (citing Screen Prism) said that he gives you a “dark reflection of the real world” [6]. And when the ugliness that inspired such stories rears its ugly head again, those films resurface and help us make sense of things. Not surprisingly, we find ourselves, in these highly polarized times, talking about *The Thing* and *They Live* (which we covered in our Adaptations Issue).

Diabolique Magazine wrote in 2017: “Headlines and pundits instruct us to fear everything from ‘suspected Russian agents’ to ‘the P.C. movement.’ If this is any indication, Carpenter is quite right that we “don’t trust each other anymore.’ Granted, there are things we should legitimately worry about, guard against, and resist. But, as Carpenter tried to warn us, such wide-ranging and unending mistrust of one another is one of them” [7]. Ain’t it the truth.



DANCE MAGIC DANCE

LABYRINTH

BY STEPHANIE MCDEVITT

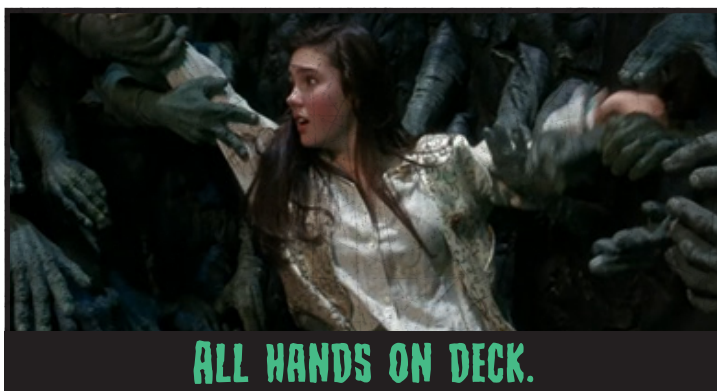
Labyrinth is not a muppet movie. Yes, it's a Henson production, but it is not *Sesame Street* or *The Muppet Show*. If I had to compare, I'd say it's more like a dark, creepy *Fraggle Rock*. Henson set out to make *Labyrinth* because he wanted to make a movie lighter than *The Dark Crystal* (1982), and discussions surrounding *Labyrinth* began in 1983 [1]. The final result was a delightfully weird movie, which would be the final film Henson ever directed.

The plot of *Labyrinth* is not that complicated. Sarah (Jennifer Connelly) is a petulant teenager who hates when her parents make her babysit her infant brother, Toby. One night, she wishes the goblin king would take Toby away. Never one to pass up an opportunity to steal a baby, Jareth, the goblin king (David Bowie), whisks Toby away to his castle. Sarah immediately realizes she made a mistake and begs Jareth to give Toby back. Jareth says she can get him back, but only

if she solves the labyrinth.

Sarah accepts the challenge and is instantly transported to the start of the labyrinth. The rest of the movie follows her journey through the maze as she meets various creatures and monsters, some who help her, others who set out to confuse her. Throughout the movie, Jareth keeps a close watch on her progress and does his best to sabotage her, but Sarah is determined to get Toby back.

Labyrinth examines the dark side of childhood: the lurking monsters, talking to (and trusting) strangers, and trying to find a way in a world in which you are unfamiliar. The labyrinth is full of traps, bullies, and trickery, and Sarah is a 14-year old kid trying to save her brother from turning into a goblin. Furthermore, the entire labyrinth is full of male creatures (except for



one) who either refuse to help her or help her but don't listen to her. Most women can relate. The lesson behind *Labyrinth* is that Sarah needs to grow up. She needs to stop complaining, start accepting her responsibilities, and be accountable for her actions; however, she is expected to do this in an environment that attempts to mislead her at every step.

In the midst of Sarah's adventure through the labyrinth, Jareth is pursuing her. In an article for *The Atlantic*, Alison Stine says, "Connelly's Sarah is 16, and Jareth, we learn, doesn't just want a new baby to be reborn as a goblin, which is disturbing enough. He wants Sarah. He wants her to love him, and his longing increases, becoming more and more creepily clear, as the movie progresses" [2]. Stine goes on to say that Bowie possessed both a paternal quality but also a creepy, sexual quality that makes this movie cringy at times (especially now that we know that back in the day, Bowie allegedly had sex with under-age girls) [3].

Henson confirmed these choices were intentional when he talked about his casting decisions. He said, "David Bowie embodies a certain maturity, with his sexuality, his disturbing aspect, all sorts of things that characterize the adult world" [4]. (Henson also considered Sting, Prince, Mick Jagger, and Michael Jackson for the role.) Furthermore, Henson cast Connelly because she "could act that kind of dawn-twilight time between childhood and womanhood" [5]. Henson wanted to create this curiosity Sarah has with Jareth but also a stranger-danger quality to further amplify the difficulty of crossing from childhood to adulthood. (A number of now well-known actresses auditioned for the role of Sarah, including Helena Bonham Carter, Jane Krakowski, Yasmine Bleeth, Sarah Jessica Parker, Mari-sa Tomei, Laura Dern, and Ally Sheedy).

Labyrinth draws inspiration from several dark childhood tales, including *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Where the Wild Things Are*, and *Outside Over There*. All four books (plus a copy of *Grimms' Fairy Tales*) are shown in Sarah's room at the beginning of the movie, and the ties to the book are obvious throughout. Sarah meets creatures who travel with her and help her through the labyrinth, just like Dorothy Gale. She has trippy experiences where things aren't exactly as they seem, just like Alice. And finally, she meets Ludo, who looks a lot like one of the wild things in the Maurice Sendak book.

Speaking of Maurice Sendak, he wasn't too pleased at the similarities between *Labyrinth* and his book *Outside Over There*. Both stories feature babies stolen by goblins. Sendak's lawyers advised Henson to stop production on the movie, but they settled the issue when Henson agreed to add a statement at the end of the movie that read, "Jim Henson acknowledges his debt to the works of Maurice Sendak" [6].

At the time *Labyrinth* was made, it was a technical achievement. Jim Henson and company built all the creatures and sets and used almost no computer animation. Most of the puppets required a team of puppeteers to operate them, but Hoggle, one of the creatures that travels the labyrinth with Sarah, was the most complex. There was one person inside the Hoggle suit (Shari Weiser), but Hoggle's face was radio controlled by four people. Brian Henson, one of the Hoggle puppeteers, explained that Weiner "does all the body movement and her head is inside the head. However, the jaw is not connected to her jaw. Nothing that the face is doing has any connection with what she's doing with her face" [7].

The team of puppeteers that worked on *Labyrinth* was largely assembled from Muppet veterans. Frank Oz (Miss Piggy, Fozzie Bear, and countless others), Dave Goelz (Gonzo, Boober Fraggle, among others), Steve Whitmire (Wembley Fraggle, Ernie, and he took over Kermit after Henson died), and Kevin Clash (Elmo) all per-

formed in *Labyrinth* with many of the puppeteers who worked on *Fraggle Rock*. In addition, two of Henson's children, Brian and Cheryl, were involved in this movie [8].

Labyrinth didn't do well in theaters. In its opening weekend, it came in 8th at the box office. In all fairness, there were a ton of 80s classics in theaters at the same time, including *Top Gun*, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, *Back To School*, and *The Karate Kid II*. *Labyrinth* only made around \$12.7 million dollars in its US release, which was about half its budget [9]. It had success in home video and became a cult favorite. In an interview in 1997, Jennifer Connelly said, "I still get recognized for *Labyrinth* by little girls in the weirdest places. I can't believe they still recognize me from that movie" [10].

Once DVD sales took off, there was talk of making a sequel. However, the Henson company decided to go with another fantasy film with the same feel to it. Author Neil Gaiman and artist Dave McKean wrote and directed a movie called *MirrorMask*, which had a limited release in 2005. In 2016, Sony Pictures announced a reboot with Lisa Henson producing and Nicole Perlman writing [11]. Unfortunately, rumors of this project came out around the same time Bowie died, which made it look like Sony was capitalizing off Bowie's death. Perlman acknowledged the poor timing, but insisted she'd been in talks with Henson for two years prior to Bowie's death [12].

Over the years, *Labyrinth* has been adapted into a variety of media, including novels, comics, a computer game, and in 2016, conceptual designer Brian Froud said he would like to see it adapted as a stage musical. In 2018, Brian Henson announced that they were doing just that and hoped it would make it on London's West End [13]. So, there are plenty of ways to experience *Labyrinth*, but I recommend starting with the original movie. It's weird but fun, has some catchy songs, and contains plenty of Henson humor. If you're a fan of *The Muppets*, *Labyrinth* is a must see.



BUZZ OFF! IT'S JUST GENERAL CELLULAR CHAOS AND REVOLUTION!

THE FLY

BY LILYANN FOSTER

David Cronenberg does not hold back his twisted eccentric madness in his 1986 reimagining of the classic 1950s creature feature, *The Fly*. Cronenberg has a tendency to focus on bodies and their extreme capabilities of, whether they are decomposing, transforming, or being tortured. This can be seen in films like the gynecological nightmare *Dead Ringers*, the terrifying tale of a murderous host mother in *The Brood*, and a look at the inadvertent side effects of using insecticide to get high in *Naked Lunch*. *The Fly* is no deviation and hyper focuses on the flesh. The film repeatedly refers to “flesh” and bodies in a devastating metaphysical sense that leads to a gruesome, tragic, and downright horrifying ending.

The film is steeped in ‘80s celebs. It stars a young Jeff Goldblum as nerd-turned-mad-scientist Seth Brundle, and the gorgeous Geena Davis as a bright science journalist Veronica “Ronny”

Quaife. After meeting at a high caliber party of the best minds in modern science, Seth introduces Ronny to an incredible invention that he insists will change the world in every way.

Enticed by a good story to put on the next cover of science magazine, *Particle*, Ronny bites and follows him back to his industrial-looking, messy apartment. Much to Ronny’s surprise Seth has invented a mind-blowing teleportation device consisting of a computer and two large egg-shaped telepods.

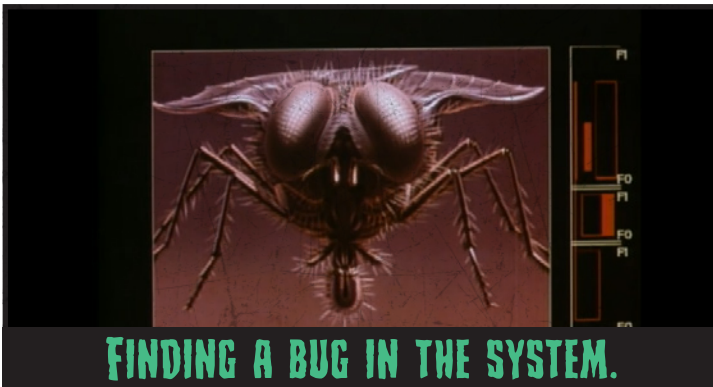
The shape of the telepod hints at the way all life begins: in an egg of some sort. All too excited to get the scoop on this story, Ronny fumbles with an audio recorder in her pocket much to the dismay of Seth, who was hoping for a more genuine human connection. Seth insists that Ronny can



SETH'S GOT A HELL OF A STORY.



PLAYING GOD WITH A POD.



FINDING A BUG IN THE SYSTEM.



PRETTY FLY FOR A SCIENTIST GUY.

not possibly run the story, at least not yet, because the machine has a fatal flaw: it can not teleport living things. And so, the dive into a fleshy nightmare begins.

Ronny still brings what she has to her editor and creepy ex-boyfriend Stathis Borans, played by John Getz. Stathis is convinced that Seth is nothing more than an impressive magician and blows off the story. Seth makes an awkward appearance at Stathis' office thinking he would have to convince Ronny to not run the story.

Instead, Seth teases Ronny, "I've come to say one magic word to you: Cheeseburger." The proposition was too good for her to dismiss. Seth offers to let her document his entire process of perfecting his machine until he can eventually teleport himself with no harm done and begins a very meat related relationship. Seth and Ronny's relationship hold an intense chemistry throughout the film, undoubtedly influenced by their current real-life relationship.

Seth focuses on working the kinks out of his computer programming. After putting a baboon through the machine, the computer reformulates the monkey inside out and it's dying. Disappointed in himself, Seth makes the conclusion: "I must not know enough about the flesh myself. I'm going to have to learn."

One drunken night when Ronny is gone, Seth puts himself through the machine successfully. Seth begins to develop an unbelievable amount of strength and energy (as well as a unrelenting sex drive). In his mania, Seth and Ronny butt heads when he attempts to force her to put herself through the machine, Ronny refuses. Becoming even more unbridled Seth spits out a relentless monologue:

“I’ll bet you think you woke me up about the flesh, don’t you? But you only know society’s straight line about the flesh. You can’t penetrate beyond society’s sick, gray fear of the flesh. Drink deep or taste not the plasma spring! See what I’m saying? I’m not just talking about sex and penetration. I’m talking about penetration beyond the veil of the flesh – a deep penetrating dive into the plasma pool.”

Seth’s obsession with flesh has peaked and leads to a very quick downward spiral of pure insanity. The monologue shows that Seth has lost a connection to humanity and is starting to view the human body in contorted scientific jargon. Seth has grown an innate desire to push the human body to every maximum potential.

After noticing his body is changing in more ways than strength, Seth returns to his computer to figure out if something went wrong during his teleportation. Seth’s trepidation increases as he discovers that the computer fused his genetic material with a fly that was also in the pod with him at the time of teleportation. Seth’s body begins rapid changes in the coming weeks as he develops more fly characteristics or what he calls “general cellular chaos and revolution.”

Meanwhile, Ronny’s fear of flesh starts to grow as she discovers she is pregnant. She has a devastating dream that she births a giant maggot. The scene is gory and solidifies a juxtaposition to Seth’s mentality of the body. While Seth is eager to transform his body, Ronny refuses to do the same. Seth learns of the pregnancy and also Ronny’s plan to have an abortion and immediately thwarts the idea for something far more sinister.

He brings her back to his apartment and reveals his disturbing plan to create “a family of three joined together in one body... More human than I am alone”. These become some of the final words of the film as Seth sheds his skin in clumps to reveal a disturbing fly humanoid

creature -- Brundlefly.

Seth has equated that the more human flesh, the more human a body would be. A terrifying conclusion and luckily one he is unable to test as Stathis fries Seth’s plans for a family fusion, resulting instead in a fusion of the Brundlefly creature and the telepod. The result is a pitiful eyesore blob of fly, flesh, and machine.

The practical effects that allowed for Brundlefly’s eerie movement, flesh-dissolving vomit, and slimy departure featured an array of never-been-done-before tactics by *Gremlins* special effects artist Chris Walas. Notably, great attention was put into how Brundlefly’s eyes looked at the end of the film. While they were meant to mimic the eyes of an insect, it was the only tool to humanize the creature, giving him his final pitiful look of pain and remorse before his inevitable death.

Cronenberg tells a deadly tale that deviates far from the 1958 creation of a man’s body with a fly’s head. The image seems cartoonish in comparison. The film is shrouded in a signature darkness that only Cronenberg has perfected.

The Fly has become a science fiction favorite and leaves audiences devastated. The film is, after all, really a romance story above all else. While most scorned lovers may look for more flesh or someone to cheat with, Seth Brundle desires flesh in the most literal sense and offers Ronny nothing else but a useless blob of it at the end of the movie. Can blood and flesh be trusted?



BIGFOOT EAT THEIR DEAD

HARRY & THE HENDERSONS

BY STEPHANIE MCDEVITT

Harry and the Hendersons is one of those movies I look back on fondly. I watched it over and over as a kid, but right before my most recent viewing, I realized I didn't remember much of the plot except that John Lithgow meets a sasquatch. I now know that I did not remember it because there isn't much plot to remember. *Harry and the Hendersons* could have lived on in nostalgia only for me, but I watched it again and have to face the reality that it's just not a good movie.

Harry and the Hendersons starts off with standard American family tropes: George (John Lithgow) is a family man who sells guns, shoots guns, and teaches his young son how to shoot guns. His wife Nancy (Melinda Dillon) is blonde, supportive of her husband, and doesn't seem to work outside the home. Surly teenager Sarah (Margaret Lanrick) is so over spending time with her family, and enthusiastic younger brother

Ernie (Joshua Rudoy) is pumped to have just shot his first rabbit. It almost seems as if this movie was set in the 50s as opposed to the late 80s.

Anyway, the Henderson clan is driving home from a camping trip when George hits some sort of animal with his awesome wood-paneled station wagon. He immediately asks Ernie to get his gun (which he says is still loaded cool, cool) and gets out of the car to put the animal out of its misery. What he finds is not an animal, but a bigfoot (who they eventually name Harry). Thinking about how much money he can make by discovering a real bigfoot, George loads Harry on the top of his car, covers him with a blanket, and brings him home with plans to show Harry to the world in the morning. The movie doesn't show how George got Harry on top of his car, but it must have been very difficult.



Well, George has one problem. Harry is not dead. George wakes up very early in the morning to find that Harry has escaped from the garage. If there's anything I've learned while working on this zine, it's never to hide your bigfoot or zombie/robot girlfriend (ala *Deadly Friend*) in the garage. They will always escape. Harry has made his way into the Henderson's house and is helping himself to the food in the fridge. What follows is a long scene of all the Hendersons coming into the kitchen to discover that Harry is alive and well.

Eventually, the Hendersons all come to realize that Harry is pretty cool and George no longer wants to kill him. So, they try to take Harry back into the forest; however, Harry gets upset when they try to put him in the car and he runs off in the neighborhood. Well, once a bigfoot gets loose in a suburban neighborhood, people start to go a bit crazy. As Harry sightings increase, everyone is out to kill him, but no one is more intent on finding him than Jacques LaFleur (David Suchet), a noted bigfoot hunter.

With the whole city of Seattle on the hunt for Harry, George is getting frantic trying to find him before someone kills him. He eventually tracks Harry down in a dumpster and, with the help of Dr. Wallace Wrightwood (Don Ameche), noted anthropologist and bigfoot expert, gets Harry in the car and heads for the mountains.

Harry and the Hendersons has an extra thin plot line and lack of character development. As I mentioned earlier, the shallow character tropes are set up at the beginning, and while the Hendersons do grow over the course of the two-hour movie, they simply come to realize that they like Harry. On a larger scale, this movie preaches that hunting for sport is wrong. Harry turns out to be a vegetarian, but George is a big hunter. When Harry sees all of George's

animal heads decorating his house, he gets very upset and buries some of the animal heads in the backyard. I guess George learns that hunting for sport isn't cool because he quits his job at the family gun store and refuses to participate in the hunt for Harry, but there's no real indication that this is a permanent change.

George, as it turns out, wanted to be an artist (he sketches Harry throughout the movie). His dad (M. Emmet Walsh) never supported his art and in fact made fun of him, telling George he's not a "real" artist. So it appears that George was raised in an environment that preached "traditional" (toxic) masculine values, and George passed that on to his son. Hopefully, his experience with Harry has helped George change course but with the flimsy plot in this movie, it's hard to tell if the lessons Harry taught George will stick.

Critics hated this movie. Most of them compared this movie to *E.T.* because Spielberg is an uncredited executive producer on *Harry*. *The Hollywood Reporter* said, "Any film with ample production values that emulates the wondrous *E.T.* must be considered a potential blockbuster, but *Harry* is so excessively cloned that audiences are likely to be disillusioned by its transparent manipulations" [1]. David Kehr of the *Chicago Tribune* said, "it takes a leisurely spin through the standard Spielberg themes, without gathering the visual grandeur or emotional extravagance that are Spielberg's trademarks" [2]. Vincent Canby of *The New York Times* said, "Attention must be paid when a movie is as aggressively awful as *Harry and the Hendersons*, though it's so pin-headed that it could be the last of its inbred line. It's not likely to spawn" [3].

It seems that the audiences didn't agree with critics. *Harry* opened third at the box office and went on to gross \$29.8 million at the North American box office and \$20.2 million internationally for a total of \$50 million worldwide. Not too shabby for a movie that only cost \$10 million to make [4]. *Harry and the Hendersons* was a kids movie. I loved it as a kid and I think the box

office numbers show that other kids loved it too.

One of the reasons I watched this movie over and over was because of Harry. The costume design made Harry's face look human, and his eyes were very expressive. We could see his emotions and that made me care about Harry. Costume designer Rick Baker designed the Harry suite. Baker won 7 Oscars for movies like *The Nutty Professor*, *An American Werewolf in London*, and *Men in Black*, and he also won for Harry [5].

The actor inside the Harry suite was Kevin Peter Hall. Hall was 7'2", so he made a very convincing Harry. Hall also played Big John in *Big Top Pee Wee*, and he went on to reprise his Harry role in the *Harry and the Hendersons* TV series. While the TV series lasted for three seasons and 72 episodes from 1991-93, Hall was only in 16 of them. Sadly, he died in 1991 after contracting HIV from a blood transfusion. He was only 35.

Speaking of the TV series, according to IMDB, it is commonly accepted that the TV series is an alternate take on the movie and what would have happened if Harry had stayed with the Hendersons instead of going back into the woods [6]. Seeing as how the whole town was trying to murder Harry in the movie, I can't imagine what the neighbors were like in the TV show. Also, what would happen to the Henderson's house? He wrecked it pretty bad in the movie, so I would guess it was totally trashed in the TV show. However, I'm never going to find the answers to these questions because I have no desire to see it.

I guess *Harry and the Hendersons* is just one of those movies that doesn't hold up. And, like some movies we rewatch as adults, it's not because it's racist or offensive in some way, it's just a simple, shallow kids movie with very little to it. If you do decide to watch it, I hope you can appreciate Harry's costume and his expressive face. It's a little weird looking at times, but it's definitely one of the best parts of the movie.



THE ULTIMATE CULT FOLLOWING THE MONSTER SQUAD

BY JANENE SCELZA & MATT SCELZA

Screenwriter/director Fred Dekkar's most memorable contributions to 80s cinema were fun, low-budget B-horror comedies — homages to the classic monster movies and comic books of his childhood. In *Night of the Creeps*, released in the summer of 1986, frat pledges unwittingly resurrect murderous alien slug-like creatures. (And if recently-thawed, parasitic aliens are your thing, check out our essay in this issue about *The Thing*). *The Monster Squad*, co-written with Shane Black and released almost exactly one year after *Night of the Creeps*, follows a group of pre-teen friends (and one slightly badass older kid), horror enthusiasts who battle classic Universal monsters (with slight modifications to their likenesses to avoid copyright infringement).

Dekkar's movies weren't commercial hits when

they arrived in theaters in the late 80s, but by the power of the Almighty (home video and cable TV), they became cult favorites, especially *The Monster Squad*. Search for it on Google and you'll find ample discussions about and tributes to the film. People love the crap out of this movie!

It's sort of a paradox, this alternate route to fame. We have covered a lot of movies in this zine that fizzled at the box office, but found audiences via home video and cable TV. While we celebrate that, sometimes we forget what that slow burn to fame means for those involved. (Again, see our essay on *The Thing*).

For Fred Dekkar, it's been bittersweet. When Moxie Sozo asked Dekkar in 2017 whether he surprised by the cult following of *The Monster*



IMPORTANT MONSTER BUSINESS!



RUDY TAKES A SMOKE BREAK.



YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN.



DRAC IS ONE MEAN MOFO.

Squad, he said: “‘Surprised’ isn’t quite the right word since the turnaround happened over a long period of time — it just took a while for [*The Monster Squad*] to find its audience. On one hand it’s very gratifying, but there’s also some melancholy, because had the movie done well when it opened, I would have made a lot more movies since then. So, despite the huge fan base it has today, my career definitely suffered and those are years I’ll never get back” [1].

Like *Troll 2* (1990), some of the young stars of *The Monster Squad* — Andre Gower (who played squad leader Sean); Ashley Banks (Sean’s little sister, Phoebe), and Ryan Lambert (too-cool-for-school Rudy) — have carried the torch to keep the memory of the film alive after almost 35 years. It began with a swiftly sold-out reunion at the Alamo Drafthouse about 15 years ago to celebrate the film’s long-awaited release to DVD, delayed by years of confusion over who owned the rights to the film.

More recently, Gower and Lambert worked behind the camera on *Wolfman’s Got Nards* documentary, in which even more fans, including Grace Chan, creator of the *I Heart Rudy* zine, reminisce about the movie. (Janene, also a Rudy fangirl, interviewed the gang several years ago for her zine, *Montag*).

The Monster Squad is the usual kiddie movie adventure battle between good and evil. The kiddies at the heart of this film must find an all-powerful amulet before Dracula and his goons do. Legend has it that once in a century, when the moon is full in the eighth house of Aquarius oh, wait, that’s the opening narration of *Duckula* (also worth checking out!).

Anyways, Sean’s mom (Mary Ellen Trainor), Champion Yard Saler, finds the diary of

none other than famed vampire hunter, Dr. Van Helsing. And that would be totally awesome for our six young horror fanatics — Sean, Phoebe, Patrick (Robby Kiger), Horace (Brent Chalem), Eugene (Michael Faustino, brother of Married With Children's David Faustino), and Rudy -- collectively known as The Monster Squad. The only problem is that the diary is in German and the Squad doesn't sprechen sie Deutsch.

Never fear! Scary German Guy is here! Actually, he's not so scary. He's a nice old man played by Leonardo Cimino, and he serves the boys pie and quietly alludes to his own past fighting monsters as a Holocaust survivor. With his help translating the diary, the boys (Phoebe was absent) learn that the amulet that holds all of the concentrated good and it becomes highly vulnerable once every century. And, it's going to happen again in just a few days somewhere in town! What are the chances?!!

Meanwhile, Dracula (Duncan Regehr) and his ghoulfriends — Frankenstein, The Mummy, a Creature From the Black Lagoon knock-off called Gillman (our favorite), and Wolfman (played by Jon Gries, aka Uncle Rico, aka Lazlo Hollyfeld) -- suddenly show up all over town, causing trouble. While they could be chilling out, and maybe doing the Monster Mash or whatever gangs of monsters do when they get together, Dracula obsesses over the amulet, certain that no one is going to stop him from getting it.

Of course, the adults in the movie (other than Scary German Guy) lack any kind of imagination to take the kids seriously when they warn everyone that monsters are about. So it's up to the kids, Scary German Guy, and Frankie, who defects from Drac's Gang, to track down the amulet and send Dracula into limbo. It kicks off with a great preparation montage set to the Michael Sembello (who wrote "Maniac" for *Flashdance*) track "Rock Until You Drop." Dance until your heart stops. Party till you die!

The film was released to mixed reviews. The LA Times called *The Monster Squad* "fun for the kid in all of us" and commended it for "hon[or]ing the imagination of children" [2]. Indeed, the kids seem like kids you might've known at that age and not some studio exec's interpretation of a kid. The old timey monsters are brought into the modern world without being too corny. Duncan Regehr, in fact, makes Dracula particularly menacing, eliciting real screams from Ashley Banks.

The Monster Squad has been called a *Goonies* knock-off. First of all how dare you! But yes, the films do have a lot in common. Both are based on classic films. *The Monster Squad* is obviously inspired by creature features of the 1930s (and for Gillman, the 1950s) while *The Goonies* draws from swashbuckling adventure films and titles like *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. Mary Ellen Trainor is mom to the leaders of both packs, Sean and Mikey. And the young ensembles takes on some serious foes with the help of a giant, friendly defector: Frankenstein and Sloth.

The Monster Squad was made on a far smaller budget than Spielberg's *Goonie* adventure. It definitely has that afternoon TV movie aesthetic. Some things did not age well. Sean and Patrick (now cringingly) accuse their principal of being a "homo." Chainsmoking Rudy is a Phillip Morris wet dream. And Horace, aka "Fat Kid," happily cocks a big ass gun when his bullies shyly compliment his monster-fighting skills.

To pre-teen and tween audiences, *The Goonies* cast is older and cooler. *The Monster Squad* kids, on the other hand, skewed younger, with two cutesy kids in the cast (Banks and Faustino), and even a cutesy clubhouse dog. And yet, both are movies that kids grew up watching over and over again and now, our age, they are even eager to share it with a new generation of kids (Janene included). Go find yourself a copy and feel like a kid again. The whole damn world could use that right now.



THE LITTLE GUYS

BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED

BY STEPHANIE MCDEVITT

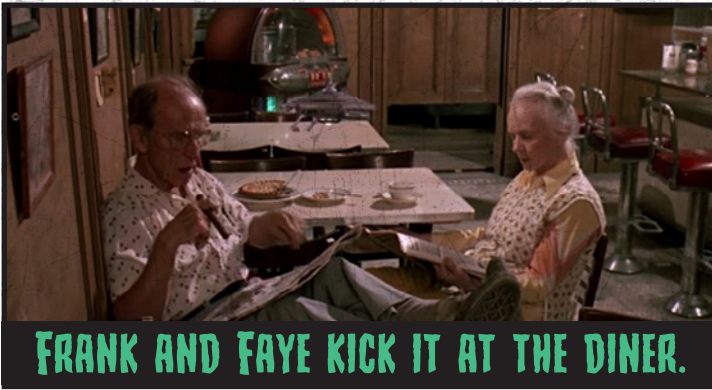
Batteries Not Included is kind of an alien movie and kind of a robot movie. It also examines predatory landlords and the fight against gentrification in New York City. Seems like a weird combination, right? It is, and the two plot points don't really blend well in this movie. It turns out little mechanical aliens trying to save a tenement building doesn't make for riveting cinema.

The plot centers around an apartment building in lower Manhattan that is set to be destroyed and replaced with high-rise apartments. The surrounding buildings have already been torn down, but the tenants refuse to leave despite payouts from the new landlord, Mr. Lacey. Among those refusing to move are an elderly couple, Frank and Faye (Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy), who also run the diner in the first floor of the building, artist Mason (Dennis

Boutsikaris), building maintenance man Harry (Frank McRae), and pregnant Marisa (Elizabeth Pena). Lacey hires Carlos (Michael Carmine) to torment the residents to convince them to move.

Carlos keeps trying to give them payouts to move, and when they refuse to take it, he wreaks havoc in their apartments by smashing their stuff with a baseball bat. He even vandalizes the small diner when Frank tells him to get lost. After suffering through Carlos's abuse, Frank seems to seriously consider moving to an old folks home. His wife Faye is suffering from dementia, and if they move to a home, someone could help Frank take care of her. One night, when Frank is at a low point, he asks the universe for help in deciding what to do.

The next morning, all of the residents wake up to



see that their previously broken things have been fixed. The diner has been cleaned up, and everything that Carlos bashed is back in its rightful place. Frank also realizes that he can't find Faye. Eventually, Mason, Frank, and Marisa head up to the roof where Faye is talking to what looks like a pile of junk. However, she insists "the little guys" have come and fixed their stuff.

"The little guys" turn out to be small spaceships that have a penchant for repairing things. They fixed the tile floor in the apartment lobby, fixed the hole Carlos kicked in Mason's door, and repaired Frank's stopwatch. All of the residents are blown away by these creatures and they readily accept their help. Soon after arriving on the roof of this building, the aliens have babies, and the family of spaceships makes themselves at home in the lower Manhattan tenement.

After some cute scenes with the spaceships helping out in the diner and playing with Mason's paint, the focus turns back to the predatory landlord company. Carlos gets more and more aggressive, even damaging the father spaceship in one of his rampages. The children spaceships fly away during the attack, and as Frank and company are out looking for them, Lacey sends in an arsonist to do the job Carlos couldn't finish.

This movie is not that good. I didn't care about any of the characters, and I had no feelings towards the spaceships. I think one of the biggest issues is that the aliens do not talk. They have eyes and they kind of emote, but not really. It's hard to care about a machine that doesn't show feelings, which I think is why most robots in movies talk (see *Deadly Friend*, *Electric Dreams*, or *Short Circuit*). I know the creatures in this movie technically aren't robots, but they are much more like robots than aliens.

The human characters didn't move me either, and Faye's dementia is very sad. Every time Carlos comes around, Faye thinks Carlos is her son Robert. She insists that Robert doesn't come by because Frank and Robert had a falling out. However, we find out that Robert died years ago in a car crash. This aspect of the movie doesn't feel like it belongs because the plot is otherwise pretty simple.

The other characters don't have complicated backstories. Mason is an artist whose girlfriend recently broke up with him. Marisa is pregnant with her fiance's baby, but he is a musician and he's never around. Frank is a former successful boxer and doesn't talk much. In fact, I don't think Frank talks for the first half of the movie. Hume Cronyn and Jessca Tandy put in good performances, but the dialogue isn't much to write home about. And the rest of the actors are fine. None of them really left an impression on me.

One of the few good parts about this movie was the set. Producer Ronald Schwary said, "we had to find a vacant lot with burned-out buildings all around it. We finally settled on an actual building on 8th Street between Avenues C and D on New York's Lower East Side" [1]. The building was really cool (I was especially a fan of the diner on the first floor) and definitely added an authentic New York City feel to the movie that wouldn't have happened on a sound stage.

According to Wikipedia, *Batteries Not Included* was originally supposed to be featured in a television series called *Amazing Stories*. However, Stephen Spielberg liked the concept and decided to make it into a movie [2]. Spielberg produced it and, frankly, I expected better of him. The special effects of the flying spaceships were cool but not outstanding. Really, almost everything about this movie left me feeling meh.

Several reviewers seemed to share my sentiment. In her review for *The Washington Post*, Rita Kemply said, "It might have been a good

idea, a story of the vanishing urban neighborhood and gentrification by tycoon. But half-pint aliens to the rescue? It's time E.T. went home" [3]. Ian Nathan wrote, "Are we really that susceptible to sentimental prodding that we'll buy into a family of alien frisbees with a heart?" [4]. On the flip side, Roger Ebert gave it a thumbs up and the reviewer from *The LA Times* liked it too.

A few reviews did mention the problematic casting in making Carlos and his Hispanic men. *The Washington Post* said, "Casting tends to be racist, with Michael Carmine as the Hispanic heavy whose gang smashes Frank's cafe and sexually intimidates pregnant tenant Marisa" [5]. However, *The LA Times* argues that "Carlos has been developed with considerable care and even humor" [6]. That doesn't make it any less racist.

Another thing I took away from all the reviews was the way they talked about Marisa. She's pregnant and not married, which was apparently an issue. Kevin Tomas of *The LA Times* comments that the characters can be boiled down to one-phrase cliches (the starving artist, the pregnant lady, etc.). Based on that simplicity, he says, "Children in the audience aren't apt to wonder why this woman isn't married. [This] isn't the kind of film that prompts questions of any kind" [7]. Roger Ebert even refers to Marisa as a "welfare mother" [8]. There is no proof of this, but she's a single, pregnant, Hispanic lady, so Ebert assumes that she must be on welfare. These comments are all pretty crappy.

Anyway, *Batteries Not Included* did well at the box office, raking in \$65 million to its \$25 million dollar budget [9], so it seems some people enjoyed it. If you do watch it, you should know that Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronyn were a real-life married couple for over 50 years (until her death in 1994). I didn't know that when I watched the movie, but looking back it makes the scenes in which he gives her medication or tries to reason with her despite her dementia very touching. So, look for those scenes to add some heart to an otherwise bland experience.



GET OUT OF MY DREAMS AND INTO MY BOWLING TROPHY SORORITY BABES IN THE SLIMEBALL BOWL-O-RAMA

BY DR. RHONDA BAUGHMAN

I've come across numerous clichés about life and plans and God and success, but here's another: Just because you're done with something doesn't mean it's done with you. In 2016, I dropped a 10-page dissertation level piece (w/footnotes!) on *Sorority Babes in the Slimeball Bowl-O-Rama* (1988) for an entry in writer/editor Mike Watt's cinephile series *Son of the Return of Movie Outlaw* [1]. Proud of my work, I thought: Ambitious fun! I'm done now. I won't need to write like this about *Sorority Babes* again! Whoops. So, to say I revel in a rich history (and celebrate my ever-expanding analysis) with this movie and its participants only nicks the surface of the connections I share with this Urban Classics [2] film.

Babes' plot is infinity-loop strung across myri-

ad fan and film sites, so it might sound familiar even if you missed catching the edited version on the USA Network's *Up All Night* show with hosts Rhonda Shear and Gilbert Gottfried. Bitchy sorority girls paddle gorgeous pledges; hot nerds attempt to infiltrate the action; everyone is caught in the magically wily web of an initiation prank gone awry at the local mall; a lovable demon puppet (aka Uncle Impy) with a devilish sense of humor grants wishes and starts a massacre; and the viewer eventually gets a happy, but dark ending.

Resembling an actual Grimm's fairy tale, it's unknown if this convention or others from multicultural biblical lore and supernatural folktales from *Babes'* writer Sergej Hasenecz was



NERDS GONNA CRASH THE PARTY.



JUST YOUR NORMAL PLEDGE NIGHT.



BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR.



A HEAD OF THE GAME.

a conscious decision or not. Rumor was he had less than two weeks to magically create the script. "It still surprises me how many people love that movie. I've had fans track me down simply to say how much *Sorority Babes* meant to them. And I am amused, bemused, and flattered," Hasenecz tells me [3].

Hasenecz verified for me the movie trivia I had heard over the decades and that IMDB lists: it only took ten days to hash out a film that has captivated me for over 30 years. "Yes, I wrote the first and (essentially) only draft in ten days. That was the deadline. David and John had already booked the bowling alley, and they needed a finished script by a certain date. I had written the treatment prior, which took two or three days. When that was approved, I started on the script. Once David [DeCoteau] and John [Schouweiler] read the script, David wanted me to add more nerd comedy to the beginning. That was a matter of rewriting a scene or two, which took an additional day, after which David decided that the way I had written it the first time was better," Hasenecz says [4].

As a writer myself, I can admit two things: Although Hasenecz wrote the script under a different, and much shorter title originally, the overly long, suspiciously strange titling device is something many writers dabble in at some point in their careers. Secondly, I'm stunned that it took 10 days to create the words for scenes in a cult film that enchanted me as a child and still captivates me as an adult. Moreover, *Babes* initially appears as harmless escapist romp, but shockingly, and possibly without intent, slides into the interpretive genre. Two words: epically extraordinary.

Director David DeCoteau took the reins of *Babes* at age 25—not too shabby for someone who began at the craft services table of *Angel* (1984) and *Tuff Turf* (1985). DeCoteau

knew he wanted his own film to reflect a "3am fever dream" [5] and he knew shooting after midnight and before dawn with the help of a skilled cinematographer would help ensure that. He also knew he wanted Scream Queen Linnea Quigley in his film, so he allowed her to choose her role. She chose punk rock, fists-a-flying, final girl Spider. "I was so, so happy I got to choose a role where I played the bad ass girl and got to say fun lines and had no shower scenes. I get the guy in the end, and it was a great role for women, and one guys also like," Linnea says [6].

She's right—and that's the first fairytale convention noticed upon rewatching—and it's beautifully flipped: the girl repeatedly rescues the guy and 'wins' the guy in the end. However, there's no hint of anything Quigley says above nor any deep literary hint Hasenecz's script had planned within the film's original or eventual title. Smart move. No one would see a film titled: A Jinn Meets a Hot King Solomon and Er'body Shake a Monkey Paw. Strike. Tubi fans would watch a film with that title; however, originally, simplistically titled *The Imp* with the tagline of "He's so wicked!" (and with just a salivating cartoon imp in sunglasses for the poster art) [7].

DeCoteau confirmed [8] Executive Producer Charles Band held a title contest to generate more ideas for title pizzazz. From that contest, *Bitchin' Sorority Babes in the Slimeball Bowl-O-Rama* appeared. Marketing refused the naughty B-word and adopted the new tagline "In a bowling alley from Hell—there's only one way to score!" With these changes alongside new and titillating (but not too juicy) box cover art, *Sorority Babes in the Slimeball Bowl-O-Rama* was unleashed upon the world.

Also unleashed once upon a time: Happy Cloud Pictures' *Demon Divas in the Lanes of Damnation* (2007), starring Brinke Stevens and featuring Rachelle Williams. *Demon Divas* is an obvious and affectionate homage to *Sorority Babes*. For Williams, much of the joy during the filming of *Demon Divas* came from "being

killed by Taffy," she tells me [9]. "I have fantastic memories from the set, and I loved portraying an updated version of Frankie [10], but the highlight of the film came at my death scene. Taffy might be pulled apart by demons in the original *Babes*, but as vengeful demon Morgan in *Demon Divas* she rips my own character's spine—and damn, we got killer lines in that scene," Williams says and continues: "As much as I feel like we really nailed our tribute to *Babes*, I would love to have something to do with the sequel!" Williams says excitedly. Williams is reminding us that, as of this writing, there's still a plan in the works to either reimagine *Babes* or produce a direct sequel.

Finally, and with much love for the VHS format, the Full Moon Blu-ray release is worth the dough for the remastering and digital restoration. The film's lighting and textures are now obvious, and the expert abilities of cinematographer S.A. Blake are immediately apparent once the cast leaves their respective sorority and nerd houses: the reason for this quite specific location mention becomes apparent within both the film and audio commentary. Additionally, DeCoteau and his team "lovingly spent a fortune putting [the Blu-ray] together," as he says in the Tales from the Bowling Alley featurette [11]. He also indicates that, while "a little long, a little repetitious," he knew fans would "want more rather than less." That's true.

DeCoteau's affectionate reminiscing shows what *Babes* fans have known all along: a tremendous amount of demanding work and a ridiculous amount of talent that went into the creation of this oddly compelling, literary patchworked creature feature. *Babes'* fans: there's also 15+ minutes of Imp interview footage, cable-controlled and voiced in the original documentary by FX wiz Craig Caton [12]. It was unexpected to see, but I knew once I saw my original thought of Uncle Impy remained true; he's one of the stand-outs, a most lovable, rock star creature of the '80s—which leaves *Sorority Babes in the Slimeball Bowl-O-Rama* as his stage—and fans like me forever howling in the audience for more.

ENDNOTES

E.T. THE EXTRA TERRESTRIAL

Released: June 11, 1982

Written by: Melissa Mathison

Directed by: Steven Spielberg

[1] “Steven Spielberg to head up Cannes Film Festival Jury” (BBC News, 2013)
<https://tinyurl.com/kty2vn72>

[2] “Top Films of All Time” (Filmsite)
<https://tinyurl.com/y8hkt3js>

[3] “The 55th Academy Awards, 1983” (Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences)
<https://tinyurl.com/4camheh7>

[4] “Complete National Film Registry Listing” (Library of Congress)
<https://tinyurl.com/y5uyd5s4>

THE THING

Released: June 25, 1982

Written by: Bill Lancaster (screenplay) & John W. Campbell, Jr. (story)

Directed by: John Carpenter

[1] [VIDEO] “Exclusive John Carpenter Intro to the Thing” (National Science and Media Museum, 2008)
<https://tinyurl.com/7ztxwhm5>

[2] “‘The Thing From Another World’ (1951) and ‘The Thing’ (1982): Who Really Goes There?” (Curtain Going Up, 2017)
<https://tinyurl.com/237jpt55>

[3] [VIDEO] “Exclusive John Carpenter Intro to the Thing” (National Science and Media Museum, 2008) <https://tinyurl.com/7ztxwhm5>

[4] “‘The Thing From Another World’ (1951) and ‘The Thing’ (1982): Who Really Goes There?” (Curtain Going Up, 2017)
<https://tinyurl.com/237jpt55>

[5] “Queer Underworld: THE THING (1982)” (Birth. Movies. Death. 2019)
<https://tinyurl.com/wjvdcua>

[6] “What Makes a John Carpenter Film a John Carpenter Film?” (No Film School, 2018)
<https://tinyurl.com/ysz8un65>

[6] “Just Wait’: On the 35th Anniversary of John Carpenter’s The Thing (1982)” (Diabolique Magazine, 2017) <https://tinyurl.com/2n6k6vb3>

LABYRINTH

Released: June 27, 1986

Written by: Terry Jones (credited), Jim Henson, Laura Phillips,

Elaine May, George Lucas (uncredited)

Directed by: Jim Henson

[1] “Labyrinth (1986) Film” (Wikipedia)
<https://tinyurl.com/6unyh9vc>

[2] “Labyrinth and the Dark Heart of Childhood” (The Atlantic, 2016)
<https://tinyurl.com/4wwf377e>

[3] Ibid.

[4] “Labyrinth (1986) Film” (Wikipedia)
<https://tinyurl.com/6unyh9vc>

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

THE FLY

Released: August 15, 1986

Written by Charles Edward Pogue & David Cronenberg

Directed by: David Cronenberg

[1] "The Fly (1986)" (Cinemaniacs, 2015)
<https://tinyurl.com/suvyfz47>

HARRY & THE HENDERSONS

Released: June 27, 1986

Written by: Terry Jones (credited), Jim Henson, Laura Phillips,

Elaine May, George Lucas (uncredited)

Directed by: Jim Henson

[1] "Harry and the Hendersons": THR's 1987 Review." (The Hollywood Reporter, 2017)
<https://tinyurl.com/pnj5de7e>

[2] "Harry and the Hendersons Takes Familiar Turns." (The Chicago Tribune, 1987)
<https://tinyurl.com/bx73ka>

[3] "Film: 'Harry,' The Story of a Sentimental Bigfoot" (The New York Times, 1987)
<https://tinyurl.com/phfdx6fv>

[4] Harry and the Hendersons (Wikipedia)
<https://tinyurl.com/sf5rhp>

[5] Rick Baker (Wikipedia)
<https://tinyurl.com/6ynzkwfp>

[6] "Harry and the Hendersons Trivia" (IMDB)
<https://tinyurl.com/usbsd2sn>

THE MONSTER SQUAD

Released: August 14, 1987

Written by: Fred Dekkar & Shane Black

Directed by: Fred Dekkar

[1] "Fred Dekker: Life at 24 Frames Per Second" (Moxie Sozo, 2017) <https://tinyurl.com/9cn5j8>

[2] "MOVIE REVIEW : 'MONSTER SQUAD' IS FUN FOR THE KID IN ALL OF US" (LA Times, 1987) <https://tinyurl.com/74c6err5>

BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED

Released: December 18, 1987

Written by: Brad Bird, Matthew Robbins, Brent Maddock, S.S. Wilson (screenplay), Mick Garris (story)

Directed by: Matthew Robbins

[1] "Batteries Not Included" (Wikipedia)
<https://tinyurl.com/46zjvej8>

[2] Ibid.

[3] "Batteries Not Included" (The Washington Post, 1987) <https://tinyurl.com/htc8e67b>

[4] Nathan, Ian. "Batteries Not Included Review." Empire. 31 December 1986.
<https://tinyurl.com/5fu282ru>

[5] Kemply, Rita. "Batteries Not Included." The Washington Post. 18 December 1987.
<https://tinyurl.com/htc8e67b>

[6] “Movie Review: ‘Batteries’ Sparks an Enchanting Fantasy” (The LA Times, 1987) <https://tinyurl.com/wtbttass>

[7] “Film: Cronyn in ‘Batteries’” (The New York Times, 1987) <https://tinyurl.com/2fwybhn3>

[8] “Batteries Not Included” (The Chicago Tribune, 1987) <https://tinyurl.com/dmrtjfvp>

[9] “Batteries Not Included” (Wikipedia) <https://tinyurl.com/46zjvej8>

SORORITY BABES IN THE SLIME-BALL BOWL-O-RAMA

Released: January 29, 1988

Written by: Sergei Hasenecz

Directed by: David DeCoteau

[1] Shortly thereafter, director David DeCoteau w/Full Moon Features would release a Blu-ray restoration with a treasure trove of behind-the-scenes footage. DeCoteau would hand this author an autographed copy of this Blu-ray at Cinema Wasteland in October 2017 – the same convention you can hear star Brinke Stevens discuss in the film's audio commentary alongside DeCoteau and writer Sergei Hasenecz.

[2] Urban Classics was a short-lived subsidiary of Empire Pictures. Babes was shot summer of 1987 and released in 1988.

[3] Email interview correspondence Sep 2021

[4] Email interview correspondence Sep 2021

[5] [VIDEO] Sorority Babes in the Slimeball Bowl-a-Rama Full Moon Blu-ray audio commentary

[6] Email interview correspondence Sep 2021

[7] See the Blu-ray special features for an interview with Brinke Stevens – behind her is even EARLIER art for this film.

[8] [VIDEO] Sorority Babes in the Slimeball Bowl-a-Rama Full Moon Blu-ray audio commentary.

[9] In-person interview, Sep 20th, 2021

[10] In the 1988 *Babes*, Frankie was originally played by Carla Baron who is now a self-proclaimed psychic on Twitter. When this author tried to locate Baron on Twitter for an interview, she found she had been blocked from Baron's feed. Neither Williams nor this author knows Baron; neither has ever interacted or communicated with Baron and found the block completely hilarious. This author can only assume politics or Baron's wish to never speak of Babes again resulted in the block, but the world may never know.

[11] This featurette is amazing for many reasons—I'll not offer spoilers for all here, but I will say it was beautiful to see a large crew, hard at work, and happily bantering, chatting, and communicating with one another. This was the pre-cell phone era, so no one hunches over their phone.

[12] Dukey Flyswatter would voice the Imp in the film itself.

All digital issues of *Girls, on Film* are available to read, for free, online at girlsonfilmzine.com. We publish quarterly. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, or subscribe to our newsletter. For inquiries about full-color prints, trades, guest writing opportunities, and collaborations, please contact Stephanie and Janene at info@girlsonfilmzine.com.

GIRLS. ON FILM

GIRLSONFILMZINE.COM

All digital issues of Girls, on Film are available, for free, at girlsonfilmzine.com. We publish quarterly. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, or subscribe to our newsletter. For prints, trades, guest submissions, and collaborations, email us at info@girlsonfilmzine.com.