

Herpetological Horrors No. 9

By Russ Case

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The Alligator People Movie Poster.

Beverly Garland swears to never buy another alligator-skin purse in *The Alligator People* (1959).

Beverly Garland with another of her wacky co-stars, the “carrot creature” from *It Conquered the World* (1956). Herpetological Horror No. 2, revealed in my May 21 blog, was Sssssss (like I said before, ALWAYS use seven S’s). That 1973 film featured a wacky scientist/herpetologist who was busily attempting to transform people into king cobras. The scientist in today’s HHCSS (that’s Herpetological Horror Classic of the Silver Screen) could be considered something of a forerunner to Sssssss’s mad Dr. Stoner, although where Stoner was intentionally trying to turn people into snakes, Dr. Sinclair in *The Alligator People* (1959) has far nobler intentions. He’s working on a formula that will help people regenerate lost limbs. And what’s the primary ingredient? Alligator serum!

Unfortunately for the doctor and his patients, things don’t exactly go according to plan. When he injects them with his alligator serum, they begin turning into gator-human hybrids. This results in one of the funnier movie monsters to ever appear on theater screens -- and there he is, in the photo accompanying this blog, menacing Beverly Garland. Beverly Garland made a specialty out of being monster bait. She was terrorized by a primitive brute in *The Neanderthal Man* (1953), faced down the infamous “carrot creature” from *It Conquered the World* (1956, see photo), and was menaced by both Curucu, the Beast of the Amazon (1956) and an alien agent in *Not Of This Earth* (1957). By the time she was face to face with her husband-turned-gator in *The Alligator People*, Garland’s vocal chords were undoubtedly strong from previous screaming.

Also featured in *The Alligator People* is horror movie stalwart Lon Chaney Jr., most famous for his starring role in *The Wolf Man* (1941). Here he plays a crazed Cajun hunter who’s after the half-man half gator that’s roaming the southern swamplands. Check out the trailer at the end of the blog to hear Chaney emote with conviction, “I’ll get you, alligator man!” It’s a crack up.

Told in flashback from “crazy” Garland’s point of view, the story centers on her search for her husband, vanished during a train trip several years previously. The trail leads to his family’s southern plantation and the aforementioned Dr. Sinclair’s experiments, of which the husband has become a central focus due to the fact that he’s now part alligator.

The makeup for the alligator man is really funny, and scenes of him running around the swamps are hilarious (you can see some of the clips in the trailer). If nothing else, the get-up looks like it could be a fun Halloween costume. Speaking of which, REPTILES magazine will be holding a Halloween costume contest this year, its first ever. Watch for the contest announcement elsewhere on ReptileChannel in the coming weeks, and maybe *The Alligator People* will inspire you to new heights in costume creation, with a winning entry into our costume contest the goal.

Being the inspiration for a winning entry in a costume contest held 50 years after their movie’s release – can you think of a better legacy for the filmmakers of *The Alligator People*?

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