

Herpetological Horrors No. 7

By Russ Case

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Anaconda Movie Poster. Where's Anaconda? When is he going to get to Anaconda? I suspect some of you, running through memories of your own Herpetological Horror Classics of the Silver Screen, have been wondering when I would get to this one. Anaconda is probably the single most popular horror film that features a reptile, if the number of sequels is any indication. To date, Anaconda has spawned three.

Not to give the two sequels short shrift (they being Anacondas: The Hunt for the Blood Orchid and the TV movie Anaconda 3; I saw the former, but not the latter) for this blog series I'm going to focus on just the first "classic" Anaconda, which was released in 1997.

The Amazon is mysterious, very mysterious. If you're in a horror movie, just stay out of the Amazon. No good ever comes from going there. Anaconda illustrates how you can get pulverized by a monstrously huge anaconda. But let's not forget one of the all-time classic movie monsters, another denizen of the mysterious Amazon: the Creature from the Black Lagoon.

In Anaconda, a documentary film crew charts a boat in order to film their latest project. Along the way they pick up Jon Voight, playing a crazy hunter who ends up hijacking the film crew and its boat, forcing them to help him hunt down the movie's title subject, a legendary giant of a snake. Voight's character is reminiscent of Quint, Robert Shaw's character in Jaws, except Voight chews the scenery to a much more hilarious degree, complete with Paraguayan accent. He's scarred, bug-eyed and fun to watch because he's so goofy.

The anaconda itself is a CGI (computer generated imagery) effect, which makes possible some entertaining situations that would have been impossible to achieve with a real snake. It's kind of fun waiting to see where the snake will pop up next and in what way, as it stalks the people who are stalking it. The documentary film crew, led by Eric Stolz (who is unconscious for three-quarters of the movie) has its hands more than full between wacky Voight and angry snake. The primary character with whom the audience is supposed to sympathize is Ice-T as one of the crew's members. I'm still trying to figure out how he at one point, after being immersed in the water, produces a pack of dry matches and lights one. This is just one instance of the movie's defiance of the natural order of things. Another is Jon Voight's ability to spring straight up in the air like a jack in the box while tied to a post, giving him the chance to grab somebody with his legs.

And now I need to give this SPOILER ALERT! Of course, evil Jon Voight gets his, and he goes down the snake's gullet. But you can't keep a good villain down, and the snake ends up regurgitating him! His dead body even winks after it is vomited forth. This was quite the hilarious moment, and it is the one that always comes to my mind when I think of Anaconda.

If the prospect of witnessing such an event excites you, then by all means check out Anaconda, my vote for the best film to ever feature a giant CGI snake and excess mugging for the camera by Jon Voight.

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