

Herpetological Horrors No. 6

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Fer-de-Lance ... now in VHS! Fer-de-Lance (1974) is a mostly forgettable TV movie that actually beat Snakes On a Plane to its primary plot device of people trapped somewhere with a bunch of venomous snakes. As I mentioned in yesterday's blog about Snakes On a Plane, I interviewed the key filmmakers of that movie, and I brought Fer-de-Lance up to writer John Heffernan. I don't remember if he said he had seen it or not, but for some reason this pretty mediocre movie stuck in my mind ever since I first saw it 35 years ago. I guess that says something for it. That and the fact that it was a sort of precursor to Snakes On a Plane.

The crew of a U.S. submarine, named the Fer-de-Lance, disembarks in Tierra del Fuego, where the submarine has stopped to load supplies. While on shore leave, one of the crewmembers comes across a vendor in a market who is selling fer-de-lances. As the snakes have the same name as his submarine, the guy decides to buy a bunch of babies. They're placed in a container and he sneaks them onboard the sub. Has your sense of doom kicked in yet?

The snakes remain hidden until the plot dictates that they slither free and begin biting the submariners. In addition to the guy who brought them on board in the first place, key sub personnel get chomped. The helmsman gets it when he's in the middle of taking the submarine into a dive. He freezes up as the venom kicks in, with a death grip on the controls. This results in the sub crashing between some rocks, where it remains wedged on the ocean floor. So now the remaining crew has to deal with not just the snakes, which are still loose on the sub, but the fact that they'll be running out of air, too. Double jeopardy!

Overall, Fer-de-Lance is pretty dull. This one must be dull if YouTube doesn't have any clips for it. And YouTube has everything. But if you're a Herpetological Horror completist, you may want to give the DVD a look.

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