

## Herpetological Horrors

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Frogs movie poster. I like a good horror movie, and I like reptiles, too. Unfortunately, whenever these two areas of interest are merged, the results have been less than stellar, and sometimes downright laughable. Still, it's possible to have some fun watching a cheesy reptile horror movie. Over the course of some blogs, I thought it would be fun to take a look at some Herpetological Horror Classics of the Silver Screen (HHCSS). Maybe you'll be familiar with some, especially more recent movies, or maybe you'll learn about some for the first time. If you're curious, in these days of Netflix it shouldn't be too hard to hunt up these movies and watch them for yourself. It helps if you've got a taste for the celluloid cheese.

Our first HHCSS is the classic 1972 nature-gone-wild frightfest, Frogs.

I begged and pleaded with my parents to let me go see Frogs when it first opened in March of 1972. The timing was lousy, though, because it premiered right when we were in the process of moving from California to Michigan. I remember we were staying in a Michigan hotel when the movie came out, and I was unsuccessful in convincing my parents that seeing Frogs was just the thing to do to alleviate the trials and tribulations of moving. No such luck. It was only once it showed up on TV that I finally got to see it.

Frogs stars Ray Milland as Jason Crockett, the evil patriarch of a southern clan living in a moldy old plantation house on an island. Milland was the star of the classic 1945 drama *The Lost Weekend*, for which he won a Best Actor Academy Award for his performance as an alcoholic. At this point in his career, though, he was appearing in films like *Frogs* and other "classics" such as *The Thing With Two Heads* (in which he played a white bigot whose head ends up grafted to black football player Rosey Grier's shoulders) and *X: The Man With the X-Ray Eyes* (actually, a pretty good movie, the title of which tells it all; it co-starred Don Rickles!).

Milland-as-Crockett has a penchant for polluting the environment, and he invites his snively and snobby relatives to his estate so they can all get together and demonstrate how much they hate each other. It's not a likable group. Then, as if their hatred for each other isn't troublesome enough, as payback for their polluting ways, nature decides to strike back at the Crockett clan in the form of attacks from a cavalcade of herpetological guest stars.

Several people get rubbed out by reptiles. I don't remember how everybody gets dispatched, but I do remember three instances of how reptiles and amphibians bumped off some of the characters.

1. One guy bites it in a greenhouse when lizards begin swarming along some shelves, knocking off bottles that are full of various chemicals. The chemicals mix together when the bottles crash to the floor, creating a deadly vapor that gasses the guy.
2. A woman is running through a swamp, gets mired in muck and gets chomped by a large snapping turtle.
3. Milland himself, confined and helpless in a wheelchair, ends up suffocated beneath a blanket of frogs and toads.

This is how I remember it, anyway. If there are any Frogs aficionados out there who remember otherwise, feel free to comment.

The poster for the movie is hilarious, with a human hand sticking out of the mouth of a bullfrog. I think it proved to be more memorable than the overall movie. See it and decide for yourself.

Stay tuned for tomorrow's blog, when I will write about another Herpetological Horror Classic of the Silver Screen (with the term "classic" being open to debate). And as always, leave a comment and let me know what you think.

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