



● Beware the swamp-dwelling Barracuda Women in *Spacehunter*

Lamont Johnson's *Spacehunter: Adventures in the Forbidden Zone*

Spacehunter (for short) is such a dispiriting experience that it forced me into happier memories of (generally) more enjoyable cinematic times. The outdoor locations, conjuring up some other planet in future years, looked in their wilderness grandeur much like Monument Valley, Ariz. Probably they were but it took John Ford's eye for composition to make it scenically special. Here, rather like the movie, it is just flat with occasional eruptions. Nature made the Valley that way; assorted Canadians and Americans have made this movie mostly monotonous exposition and, climactically, violent and confusing action.

Another pleasant recollection was that 3-D used to be fun. Be assured that there have been stereoscopic films – even whole features, with stories, around for quite a long time. Columbia's ad campaign for *Spacehunter* calls it the first 3-D film backed by a major studio. They must mean the first since last Tuesday. Actually, Columbia's very own torchbearing lot on Gower Street in old Hollywood produced the earliest of the 1953 wave, *Man in the Dark*, following on the independently-made *B'wana Devil*, which started the protruding balls rolling back then. No doubt, we're expected to have short memories, as well as attention spans, in these enlightened days.

3-D can still be fun. The kids in the audience settled down for some as *Spacehunter* began and I joined them in hope. To be fair, they mostly seemed content at the end but old greybeard knew better. There were some fair effects; even the tendency of 3-D to make human figures look dwarfish was exploited

quite well against the big natural spaces and rocks of the aforesaid Monument Valley. And Peter Strauss and young Molly Ringwald – aided by a few sharp lines in the script – seemed to give it all at least an honest try. TV movie-style. But alas, the wit ran dry, the nasties once introduced proved dreary and the (single) big indoor set was dark and grungy in the extreme.

An outsider cannot speculate on whether Jean Lafleur, who was to have directed from his own co-written story, could have done so adequately, once the originally modest project escalated and 3-D filming was imposed, almost at the last minute. Lafleur, in print, has been very reasonable and not publicly resentful of either Columbia or the chosen replacement, journeyman Lamont Johnson. One hopes he'll live to fight another day. Closing the book on that, then, it can be pointed out that nobody does anything on *Spacehunter* more than adequately and that its achievement – if not its ambition – remains modest indeed.

Clive Denton ●

SPACEHUNTER: ADVENTURES IN THE FORBIDDEN ZONE (in 3D) d. Lamont Johnson p. Don Carmody, John Dunning & Andre Link sc. Edith Rey, David Preston, Dan Goldberg & Len Blum story by Stewart Harding & Jean Lafleur d.o.p. Frank Tidy, B.B.C. p. des. Jackson DeGovia ed. Scott Conrad A.C.E. music Elmer Bernstein sp. makeup efx. Thomas R. Burman cost. des. Julie Weiss p. man. William Zborowsky 1st asst. d. Tony Lucibello 2nd asst. d. Elizabeth Halko, Erika Zborowsky art. d. John R. Jensen, Brent Swift, Michael Nemirsky 3-D consultant Ernest McNabb cam.op. Ron Orioux Cyrus Block 1st cam. asst. Roderick J. Priddy, Tom Fillingham 2nd cam. asst. Douglas Craik, Michael Lund, John Clothier, Curt Petersen, Doug Field loc. sd. rec. Richard Lightstone boom op. Jim Thompson loc. man. Warren Carr sc. sup. Sarah Grahame asst. to Don Carmody Victoria Barney sup. p. auditor Rejane Boudreau const. co-ord. Ken Chang sp. props const. Robert Joyce sp. efx. co-ord. Dale Martin casting Karen Rea p. co-ord. Susan Dukow, Linda Sheehy asst. p. co-ord. Oriana Bielawski, Casey Grant casting asst. Annette Benson p. asst. Rob Cowan, Hank Lawrey, Jim Lansbury, Gwen Spence p. acc't. (Moah) Kay Larlham p. acc't. (Van.) Lorraine Baird asst. ed. David Degeus, George Martin, Don Brochu graphics Lee Cole optical co-ord. Vicky Witt ed. asst. (Van.) Michael Smith, Bruce Giesbrecht post-p. 3-D advisor Martin Jay Sadoff post-p. asst. Ann Couk sp. visual efx. produced by Fantasy II Film Effects art. d. Michael Minor sp. efx. sup. Gene Warren, jr. Peter Kleinow p. sup. Leslie Huntley model shop sup. Dennis Schultz model makers Tom Hucht-

hausen, Will Guest, Kam Cooney, Gary Weeks, Gary Crawford, Mark Joyce, Michael Joyce miniature painter Ronn Gross pyrotechnics Joseph Viskocil cam. op. John Huneck sc. consultant Jerry Pajawa, Bill Strom p. asst. Don Bland, Jane Pahlman, Casey Kilbride, John Grant sp. optical efx. Image 3 optical photo. Phil Huff, Mike Warren lineup Linda Henry matte paintings Matte Effects efx. animation Ernest D. Farino welder foreman Lee Routly metal sculptors Paul Neanover, Richard Gilmore, Stuart Carlisle, Richard Honigman topologist Kim Hix sculptor Bill Isen art dept. asst. Sharon Chang const. foreman Art Wills, Bruce Gfeller stand-by painter Tony Leonardi paint foreman John Tyrell, Dick Girod chief set dec. Carol Lavoie set dec. Linda DeScenna leadmen Rich McElvin, Michael Taylor gaffer John Bartley better boy Stephen Jackson, Jim Hurford key grip Dillard Brinson dolly grip Dave Gordon set up grip Ben Rusi camera car Tom Countryman crane op. Ken Rich ward. Gail Filman hd. hairstylist Tom Booth hairdressers Susan Boyd, Joanne Henderson sp. efx. makeup Steve Laporte, Dale R. Brady, Rob Burman, Sandra Burman, Kathie Clark, Eric Fiedler, Linda Frobos, Kenneth J. Hall, Frederick Luff IV, Marc Tyler hd. makeup artist Del Acedeva makeup artist Cathy Shorkey, Phillis Newman props master Erick Nelson asst. props Dave Newell, Bill Thumm prop buyer Gail Simon prop builders Rebecca Cambruzzi, Sharon Seymour, Doug Ball, Ed Johnson, Wayne Zavosky, Perry McLamb, Trische Miner, Betty Thomas, Frank Parker, Dan Morris sp. efx. Gary Bentley, George Erschbaumer, Darrell Pritchett, Michael Clifford, Keith Richins, Paul Smith, Robert Burns, Steve Luport, Bob Tiller transp. co-ord. Jake Callihoo, John Scott driver cap. Ian Urquhart shipping co-ord. Pablo Paul craftsman Joanne Ryan, Greg Norton add. casting (Van.) Lindsay Walker unit pub. Steve Rubin stills Takashi Seida 2nd. unit cam. John Goode, Larry Dyer, Robert Reed Altman sd. ed. Blue Light Sound Inc. sup. sd. ed. Robert Rutledge, Scott Hecker sd. ed. Lon E. Bender, Wylie Stateman, Bob Newlan, George Anderson, Paul Huntsman sd. processor Craig Harris mus. ed. LA DA sd. re-rec. Les Fresholtz, C.A.S./Arthur Piantadosi, C.A.S./Dick Alexander, C.A.S. motion picture equip. Cinetech, William F. White Ltd. optics Creative Film Arts 3-D main title des. R/Greenberg Assoc., Inc., NYC sd. fac. The Burbank Studios exec. p. Ivan Reitman assoc. p. Stewart Harding p.c. Zone prod. running time 90 min. dist. Columbia Pictures I.p. Peter Strauss, Molly Ringwald, Ernie Hudson, Andrea Marcovici, Michael Ironside, Beeson Carroll, Hrant Alianak, Deborah Pratt, Aleisa Shirley, Call Timmins, Paul Boretzki, Patrick Rowe, Reggie Bennett, stunt co-ord. Walter Scott asst. stunt co-ord. Ben Dobbins hang glider sup. Joe Greblo hang glider pilots Rich Grigsby, Roy Haggard, Chris Price, Christie Greblo stunts Greg Walker, Melvin Jones, Beth Nuffer, George Josef, Jacob Rupp, Tony Morelli, Bill Stewart, Betty Thomas, Mike Adams, Bradley Bovee, Tony Cecere, Danny Costa, John-Clay Scott, Ben R. Scott, Clifford Happy, Jerry Gatlin, Phil Chong, Vince Deadrick sr., Vince Deadrick jr., Keith Wardlow, John Wardlow, Peter Cox, Bill Ferguson, Alex Greene, John Scott, Chere Bryson, Ann Chatterton, Joyce McNeal, Lori Scott.

Anthony Kramreither's *All In Good Taste*

If *All in Good Taste* is to be considered at all – a proposition open to serious doubt – then it ought to be given its due and considered from the critical perspective that offers the most opportunity for both elucidation and appreciation. In this case, that can only be the perspective of anti-art.

As J. Hoberman laid down the criteria, anti-art (see *Film Comment* vol. 16, no. 4) begins with the objectively bad film, which, "attempts to reproduce the institutional mode of reproduction, but it's failure to do so deforms the simplest formula and clichés so absolutely that you barely recognize them." Objectively bad films include works by Edward D. Wood, Jr. and Oscar Micheaux, works that relentlessly destroy every illusion they attempt to create, that deconstruct themselves before your very eyes and

leave nothing but the grinding, ceaseless awareness of botched artifice.

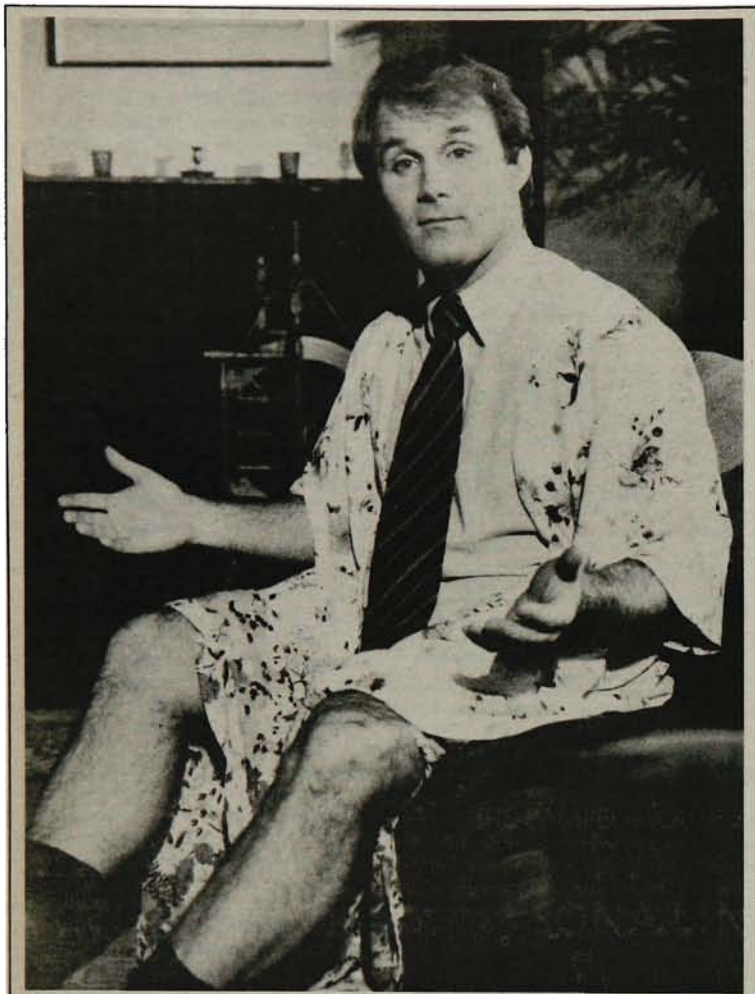
All In Good Taste more than amply fills the bill. Actors gaze serenely off-camera and recite their *non sequiturs* with a numbness leagues beyond the merely wooden. Something intended as a running gag lurches on screen, sets up its premises, then vanishes utterly. The same apartment is portrayed by two wildly different locations – one of them a town-house. The same reaction shot gets cut in twice before the action occurs, and not once afterwards. Literally dozens of shots are repeated time without number, often in mutually exclusive contexts. Montage sequences break out without reason or direction and crumble to chaos within six shots, victims of their own frantic speed.

It is a level of ineptitude comparable to that in *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, but by itself still not enough to truly plunge a work into the rancid depths of anti-art. For that, says Hoberman, there must also be a certain seriousness of purpose and a deeply zoned personal vision at the helm, if not actually in control of it.

The vision belongs to producer, director, co-writer Anthony Kramreither, whose previous works include *Mondo Strip I and II*. I haven't seen either, but I'm reliably told that he promoted as serious sociology what were, in fact, tacky and inept orgies of tits 'n ass. Their existence makes *All In Good Taste* an unquestionably personal film, for they provide its few shreds of plot and theme and, I suspect, a good deal of its footage. The story concerns a sensitive, talented filmmaker whose inability to get backing for his serious message movie forces him into the clutches of a crass producer who demands that he make a tits 'n ass orgy, promoted as sociology, called *Mondo Strip*, which turns out to be such a critical and financial success that the filmmaker agrees to do a sequel.

But simple wish-fulfillment (in real life, *Mondo Strip I & II* bombed) and self-justification are not the end of Kramreither's delving into the gummy reaches of his soul. In the final sequence, the filmmaker (Jonathan Welsh) reluctantly agrees to make more sleaze only so the producer will leave him alone to enjoy his private sleaze. It manages, at the same time, to be the ultimate whine of "He made me do it" self-justification and its coldly cynical "I'm doing it to you suckers on purpose" opposite. Given the identity between the two characters, the effect is one of having just watched a particularly small, pallid and repellent scorpion sting itself to death.

Even so, *All In Good Taste* is far from being an anti-masterpiece of the order of *Glen Or Glenda*. It misses on three counts. The first is money: with even less of it, Kramreither would have been deprived of such pros as Harvey Atkin and might then have produced a movie untainted by even brief flashes of competence. Second, his decision to make this a comedy robs us of one of anti-art's legitimate pleasures: laughter. The intentionally funny in anti-art does not transmute to the unintentionally funny, but to the unintentionally unfunny. In the grammar of the cinema, two negatives do not make a positive. Third and most important, Kramreither seems to be totally uninterested in, or perhaps afraid of, his own obsession – naked bodies. They're present at every turn, but their presentation is so perfunctory, so lacking in affect that they fail even as window-dressing. With one significant exception: we see the naked body of the filmmaker, who has just hinted strongly at having



● Caught with his pants down is Jonathan Welsh in the tasteless *All in Good Taste*

the ugliest, smallest genitals in the Western world, receding down a confining corridor while female laughter rings cruelly on the soundtrack. It is the closest thing the movie has to an emotional centre and is, I think, the true colour of Kramreither's obsession. He ought to gaze at it more closely; maybe he'll be inspired to do for the human form what Edward D. Wood did for the pink angora sweater.

It's possible these problems will disappear in future works – the money one seems especially likely to get a fast cure – and Tony Kramreither will go on to produce a work that, again in Hoberman's words, "projects a stupidity as fully awesome as genius." If he does, we may be in for a Kramreither cult. If so, a word of warning is in order.

Watching anti-art is not like watching the ordinary bad movie. It has a very real consciousness-distorting power that is not unlike that ascribed by William Burroughs to heroin and that has never been better described than by St. Anselm of Ghent, the 15th-century mystic who wrote of the experience of extended flagellation: "... then did Creation reveal an other face. The wall before mine eye did become as stones apart and unjoined each from the other, though none I knew had moved. And all sound, however sweet before, was now as many voices of men raised in anger in an unknown tongue. Sickened I was, yet not sickened, for this other, cruel, Creation did benumb me with the weight of its horrors and so did protect me from full and destroying apprehension of them. And this other face of Creation did stay before mine eye even after the scourge had ceased its blows for several hours." (*Bryden's*

Lives of the Saints, Oxford University Press, 1958)

Do you really want to do that to yourself?

Andrew Dowler ●

ALL IN GOOD TASTE

p./d. Anthony Kramreither sc. Rick Green. Anthony Kramreither sc. sup. Don Cullen. Roy Wordsworth d.o.p. Dennis Miller p. man. Fraser McAninch assoc. p. & ed. Robert C. Diez d'Aux 1st. asst. d. Robert Appelbe asst. to the p. Shelby Gregory continuity Tannis Baker 2nd asst. d. Fiona Paterson 3rd asst. d./2nd asst. ed. Joel Green p. sec. Janis Diez d'Aux p. acct. Murray Silver make-up Carmen Miller gaffer John Herzog film process Film House sd. Quinn Sound unit publicist Linda Shapiro pr David Novek Assoc. Inc. p.c. Manesco Films Ltd. dist. Pan Canadian running time: 90 min. colour 35mm l.p. Jonathan Welsh, Jo-Anne Clark, Harvey Atkin, James B. Douglas, Linda Renhoffer, Patti Oatman, Jack Anthony, Don Cullen, Nancy Kerr, Gary David, Rummy Bishop, Kathy Michael McGlynn, Mary Pirie, Cathy Gallant, John Kozak, John Davies, Stan Lesk, Richard Ayres, Carl Albertson, Rebecca Lynn Novak, Matsu Anderson, Charlotte Andrew, Big Lou Pitoscia, Kathy Morin, Gina Vottero.

Stuart Cooper's The Disappearance

Nearly six years after it was originally to have been released, Garth Drabinsky's first production, *The Disappearance*, finally made it onto Canadian screens and almost simultaneously went to pay-TV. When a film has been that long on the shelf, the natural reaction, given the recent history of Canadian cinema, is to

suspect a work of dubious merit. However, when compared to some of the "lost" films made in 1979-1980, this 1977 production is not without interest, though it must, in all honesty, be called a failure.

Two notable cinema stylists loom large in the background of this picture. The dark narrative, fractured by numerous flashbacks, calls to mind the work of Nicolas Roeg, and not without reason. In addition to the presence of Donald Sutherland in the lead role – he appeared in Roeg's *Don't Look Now* – the script is by Paul Mayersberg, who also wrote for Roeg *The Man Who Fell To Earth*.

Similarly, John Alcott's photography, aided by Anne Pritchard's production design, clearly suggests the work he has done for Stanley Kubrick. The Canadian sections of the film, shot in and around Habitat and Man and His World in Montreal during the winter, show the influence of *A Clockwork Orange* in its functional, sterile settings. The British segment, meanwhile, with its setpiece in a converted Elizabethan coach house and an adjoining greenhouse, has some of the lushness and decadence (though not the dim smoky lighting) of *Barry Lyndon*.

There is, however, something clearly wrong in what purports to be a thriller if these technical matters are the best aspects of the film. To be sure, director Stuart Cooper does not go as far as the British commercial directors – such as Alan Parker, Ridley Scott, Adrian Lyne and Hugh Hudson, who have tended to subordinate plot almost totally to technique, but *The Disappearance* is clearly heading that way. For it is the story, and the inability of the filmmakers to convincingly execute it, that has kept the film in storage for so long.

Donald Sutherland plays Jay Mallory, a professional assassin, whose employers (the "Office") use an international advertising agency as a front. Mallory has been resisting a new assignment, because he is trying to find what has become of his Québécoise wife Celandine (Francine Racette), who has suddenly disappeared. He eventually accepts the assignment, but only so that he can go to England to confront Roland Deverell (Christopher Plummer), for whom he suspects Celan-

dine has left him. From his contact Atkinson (John Hurt), he discovers that Deverell is also his target, but because of his personal involvement finds himself reluctant to complete the contract.

The problem with the film lies here. While the hit man is a staple of the macho side of mystery fiction, he has not been too successful as a film protagonist, as such action heavyweights as Clint Eastwood (*The Eiger Sanction*) and Charles Bronson (*The Mechanic*) have found out. Donald Sutherland plays Mallory so coldly that there is no chance that the audience can find any sympathy with him. He is not a big enough name in the marketplace that the film could be piggy-backed on a more popular or sympathetic performance such as *Ordinary People* or *Threshold*, as both the American and Canadian distributors attempted. The only noteworthy aspect of the role is that, in retrospect, Sutherland's performance becomes a dry run for his role in *Eye of the Needle*, right down to the tweed suit, mustache and haircut.

The alternative to concentrating on Mallory's character would have been to treat the film in terms of the violent but passionate relationship between Mallory and Celandine, as seen through the Roegian flashbacks. But Francine Racette, in spite of her personal relationship with Donald Sutherland, is just inadequate for the role, which ends up as an amalgam of the worst aspects of Carole Laure and Geneviève Bujold. Moreover, in re-editing the film, Fima Noveck, who already had shown in his work on *Suzanne* and *Circle of Two* that he prefers simple plotting, has cut the flashbacks to such a degree that they have little impact and give none of the psychological insights into the characters that is the *raison d'être* for the device in the first place. All the secondary characters, most notably co-producer David Hemmings as Celandine's first husband, are reduced to little more than walk-ons.

The failure of *The Disappearance* taught Garth Drabinsky some lessons, so that when he made *The Silent Partner* he was in a position to ensure distribution through his own company. By the time he made *The Changeling*, he had



● No sympathy for the hit-man: Donald Sutherland and real-life wife in *The Disappearance*