

## “THE MILLENNIUM BUG” (Film Review)

Written by Kelly Stewart

Thursday, 15 December 2011 12:04

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Ah...the good old days of the Y2K scare. You might remember everyone around the world fixing up their computers, or heading for the hills to escape the coming doom at midnight of the new Millennium like it was an Orson Welles WAR OF THE WORLDS broadcast. THE MILLENNIUM BUG is a great sendup of the Y2K scare with a retro nod to 1950s monster movies, adding the twist that the “bug” is actually a 1,000-year-old giant insect coming out to prowl.

THE MILLENNIUM BUG has been making its way around the horror festival circuit for several months now, winning Best Horror Feature at the New Orleans Horror Film Festival and Dragon\*Con among others and Best Visual Effects at Buffalo Screams, and is currently seeking distribution. The story takes place on New Year’s Eve 1999, where we join the Haskin family—made up of father Byron (Jon Briddell), daughter Clarissa (Christine Haebberman) and new stepmom Joany (Jessica Simons)—who are heading out to the countryside to escape the coming calamity in the cities due to the Y2K phenomenon. Once in the sticks, they’re captured by a hillbilly family called the Crawfords, whom we first meet with daughter Pearlene (Ginger Pullman) giving birth on the kitchen table (while the dad eats dinner beside her); we actually see the deformed baby come out of her vagina. Being that it’s her brother’s child, they take the infant out and shoot it like a lame horse. How’s that for a family introduction?



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This brood is also made up of brothers Billa (John Charles Meyer), Fij (Adam Brooks), Rip (Ben Seton), Uncle Hibby (Trek Loneman) and Granny Willow (Sandi Steinberg). Adding to the mix is a researcher (Ken MacFarlane) who's out in the woods waiting for the reappearance of one of the most rare creatures on Earth, due to come out of the ground at midnight: the “Millennium Bug.”

Besides some brief moments set on a road at the beginning of the film, THE MILLENNIUM BUG was shot almost entirely on one large soundstage to create a controlled situation. The film is highly stylized, and realism is thrown out the window, both in the performances and the visual design. Even the trees have a bit of a fake, cartoony feel to them, and the look suggests a live-action EC comic, with large beams of light representing the moon's illumination. The bug monster itself is right out of '50s monster fare, without any true attempt at realism—but that's really the fun of the film. The moviemakers are militantly against digital FX, even calling this a “no CGI film” right in the credits and spreading the word with “no CGI” stickers at all its public screenings. This is old-school gags all the way with large rubber puppets, on-set gore and miniatures—which is not to say the special FX aren't well done. Some of the combinations of miniatures with live actors are among the most seamless I've seen, especially for an independent production.

THE MILLENNIUM BUG is the brainchild of Kenneth Cran, who was the writer, director, a producer and executive producer, one of the production designers, a creature FX and miniatures creator and even the costume designer. Cran has done an admirable job of putting together this low-budget project, and with a tighter script and more defined characters next time, his next outing will really be something to look forward to. For horror fans unimpressed by CGI-heavy flicks like this year's new version of THE THING, THE MILLENNIUM BUG is a refreshing old-school throwback to the last millennium. See its official website here. <http://www.mbugmovie.com>

