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Wednesday, 10 October 2012 10:53

Recently, Hollywood box-office analysts have noted an alarming drop-off in 3D revenue during new films' opening weekend releases. Whereas a year ago 3D made up 60 percent or more of opening weekend ticket sales, the percentage has dropped to about half that number in current weeks. Are audiences getting tired of the gimmick and paying the extra bucks for the extra-viewing dimension? Or are the films themselves just not so special to warrant the higher prices and to have a big piece of plastic sitting on the bridge of your nose for two hours?

Well, to reinvigorate your love for 3D and see the format done right, look no further than 1954's classic monster flick CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON, which begins a special one-week engagement (presented for the first time since its initial launch in its original Polaroid 3D) at New York City's Film Forum (209 West Houston; [212] 727-8110) from October 12-18. With this gorgeous Universal Pictures restoration, CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON has never looked better, and rarely has 3D been this immersive, crisp and beautiful (especially the underwater scenes)—and all in glorious black-and-white, no less!

Directed by studio contract man Jack Arnold, who a year earlier helmed Universal's previous sci-fi 3D hit IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE, CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON has inspired generations of monster kids since its '50s debut. Directors, FX artists and writers like Steven Spielberg (his JAWS owes CREATURE a big debt), John Landis, Joe Dante, Frank Darabont, David J. Schow, Greg Nicotero, Guillermo del Toro and Fango scribe Tom Weaver (whose McFarland CREATURE trilogy filmbook will hopefully be out next year) have been singing the film's praises for decades. And what's not to like? CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON lives on as the quintessential creature feature to this day, a simple but effective monster picture that still holds up and has not devolved into unintentional camp like many other

films of the period.

The setup couldn't be simpler. After a fossilized Creature claw is found near an Amazon river bank, an expedition sets out to track down this evolutionary missing link between man and fish. The scientists onboard include a "who's who" of sci-fi film greats, such as IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE's rugged academic Richard Carlson; THE BLACK SCORPION's Richard Denning; and I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF's Whit Bissell. Plus, there's the lovely Julie Adams, who's the center of the film's unique love quadrangle. Yes, that's right. Not only are Carlson and Denning pining for the leggy Ms. Adams, but the Devonian-age Gill Man flips for her after spying her sexy river swim. CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON borrows a page from the KING KONG playbook here, with its suggestion of the possibilities of interspecies romance (I never really bought into that, though; my sister's dog never fell for her cat). By the way, octogenarian Adams is CREATURE's only surviving cast member, outside of unbilled underwater suit performer Ricou Browning. The cheerful actress still keeps active on TV (several episodes of LOST) and on the convention circuit.

CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON's relevancy today continues due to its still-effective 3D; Arnold's no-fuss direction; the great, bombastic score by unnamed composers Henry Mancini (yes, the PINK PANTHER guy!), Hans J. Salter and Herman Stein and its virile cast. But, of course, the main reason we remember CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON is its titular bipedal undersea denizen, one of the greatest movie monsters of all time. Created by the design and makeup team of Milicent Patrick, Bud Westmore and Jack Kevan, the Gill Man stands tall as the perfect example of man-in-a-suit monster-making that blows away the CGI imposters of today. He's a believable living, breathing, walking and swimming monster that immediately suspends our disbelief. You won't spot any zippers on the Creature's back (hidden by the suit's scales), but you can notice bubbles coming from a hidden air hose that the performer sucked on between takes in several shots.

CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON still tips the scales (sorry!) as one of the best monster movies of all time. It's inevitable that Universal will remake CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON in the foreseeable future; as a matter of fact, Landis, del Toro and even THE HUNGER GAMES' Gary Ross, son of original co-scripter Arthur A. Ross, have been attached to CREATURE updates over the years. So now's the chance to see the first CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON (and, please, in 3D!) on the big screen before it gets a fresh coat of brine.