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**Graphic! Lurid! Sensational!**

**Exploitation and B-Movie Posters**

**April 7 - May 21, 2016**

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**Suspiria (1977)**

Once You’ve Seen It
You Will Never Again Feel Safe In The Dark

**The Rocky Horror Picture Show**

a different set of jaws
In the 30s, when Hollywood built its reputation as manufacturer of wholesome family entertainment, scandalous groups of independent filmmakers produced and distributed films dealing with issues prohibited by the industry’s self-devised regulatory code. The Motion Picture Production Code, popularly known as the Hays Code, comprised a set of moral guidelines developed by the studios themselves to stave off government interference,インターネット禁止ernment interference promised by abundant Hollywood scandals as well as by snafu films. Among other things, the Hays Code prohibited nudity, images of drugs or white slavery, venereal diseases or prostitution in children. For almost 40 years Hollywood regulated itself, but the delay for the forbidden never went away.

Instead, this delay served as an opportunity for small business, leading to the birth of the exploitation film. The term derives first from these films’ advertising, which, as many of the posters here attest, sensationalized the forbidden, and exploited representations of drug use and sexuality in order to turn a profit. This was a necessary strategy since none of the films featured stars or anything resembling production values. Some of our examples speak to this directly: Confessions of a Vice Bitch (dir. S. Roy Luby, William O’Connor, Melanie Street, Hema Walker et al., 1940), a pretense to trace the career of mobster Lucky Luciano. The film offers a self-justification—what was called in the trade the “square-up”—of highlighting immorality in order to educate, which here takes the form of Lucky breathlessly confirming “Crime doesn’t pay.” Lucky’s clichéd message (which fools no one) also serves to signal desire’s fulfillment is necessarily deferred. Exploitation and B-movies, not despite but in that B-movies were made by the major studios, while Poverty Row films were made by small, independent producers. The wonderful B horror/monster film, so B and Poverty Row films could push sex and violence a bit, though not to the extent of the exploitation film. Roger Corman’s Attack of the Crab Monsters (1957) features plentiful blood and dismemberment; and The Astrology Shrine (dir. Ronnie Ashcroft, 1957) gifts us with a lethal blonde alien in a skin-tight metallic suit, black heels, and Joan Crawford’s eyebrows, as well as a great poster.

The posters, whether for an exploitation film, B-movie or Poverty Row production, have to be appreciated as essential parts of the experience. Like the films they promote, they attempt to address the viewer directly, appealing to visual curiosity and a desire to see what has been forbidden or repressed. While one might habitually call Attack of the 50 Ft. Woman (dir. Jack Arnold, 1958) a terrible film—it’s right for media democracy better special effects than that!—the poster offers an iconic, even utopian image of feminine power at a time when those were few on the ground. Like the films, these images betray that changes too. But even as the limited palette of Jerry James Marshall, filmmaker’s Daughter (dir. William Beaudine, 1946) appears aesthetically impoverished it can’t help but gain attention and curiosity—can it? And why is the makeup work-up? It doesn’t, but not for lack of trying. The poster had to create the audience; in many circumstances the poster had even to create the film, as it was often drafted before a real film had been shot.

Made by independent producers and filmmakers, distributed to neighborhood theaters as well as by risqué films. Among other things, the Hays Code prohibited nudity, images of drugs or white slavery, venereal diseases or prostitution in children. For almost 40 years Hollywood regulated itself, but the delay for the forbidden never went away. Instead, this delay served as an opportunity for small business, leading to the birth of the exploitation film. The term derives first from these films’ advertising, which, as many of the posters here attest, sensationalized the forbidden, and exploited representations of drug use and sexuality in order to turn a profit. This was a necessary strategy since none of the films featured stars or anything resembling production values. Some of our examples speak to this directly: Confessions of a Vice Bitch (dir. S. Roy Luby, William O’Connor, Melanie Street, Hema Walker et al., 1940), a pretense to trace the career of mobster Lucky Luciano. The film offers a self-justification—what was called in the trade the “square-up”—of highlighting immorality in order to educate, which here takes the form of Lucky breathlessly confirming “Crime doesn’t pay.” Lucky’s clichéd message (which fools no one) also serves to signal desire’s fulfillment is necessarily deferred. Exploitation and B-movies, not despite but in that B-movies were made by the major studios, while Poverty Row films were made by small, independent producers. The wonderful B horror/monster film, so B and Poverty Row films could push sex and violence a bit, though not to the extent of the exploitation film. Roger Corman’s Attack of the Crab Monsters (1957) features plentiful blood and dismemberment; and The Astrology Shrine (dir. Ronnie Ashcroft, 1957) gifts us with a lethal blonde alien in a skin-tight metallic suit, high heels, and Joan Crawford’s eyebrows, as well as a great poster.

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