

CLAN OF IGORS

A MONTHLY YARN CLUB BY UNDERCOVER OTTER

APRIL 2020: NIGHT OF THE LEPUS (1972)



Giant. Killer. Bunnies. That's all I'm saying my friends.

THE PLOT

The Arizona ranch of Cole Hillman (*Rory Calhoun*) is plagued with rabbits, and he wants to employ an ecologically sound control method. He calls in a favor from his college friend Elgin Clark (*DeForest Kelley*) who in turn asks zoologist Roy Bennett (*Stuart Whitman*) to help.

Bennett immediately begins injecting rabbits with hormones and genetically mutated blood in an effort to develop a method of disrupting rabbit reproduction... Of course, one of the test subjects escapes, resulting in a race of bloodthirsty, wolf-sized, man-, horse-, and cow-eating bunnies.

Eventually the National Guard is called in for a final showdown with the terrorizing rabbits.

WHEN ZOMBIES TURN INTO BUNNIES

The script for *Night of the Lepus* didn't actually start out as a killer bunny movie. The original title of the film was "*Night of the Lepers*" and didn't even include any rabbits. It was about a spread of a mass plague through zombie-like lepers. The original script was made to cash in on the huge success of "*Night of the Living Dead*" (1968).

The MGM executive that got the script, spilled wine on the front page of the stack of papers and mistook the word 'Leper' for 'Lepus' (which is the scientific name for hares). He told his teenage daughter about the misreading and wanted to laugh it off. However, his daughter really loved the idea of killer bunnies and that's when the studio executive decided to commission some heavy edits on the script, to make it fit that bill.

JANET LEIGH

In an interview with film historian Tom Weaver, star Janet Leigh said she took the role because it was shot near her home, and meant less time away from her family. She also said, "I've forgotten as much as I could about that picture."

Janet Leigh declined the appearance of her two teenage daughters, Kelly Curtis and Jamie Lee Curtis in the movie. Janet was adamant that her kids would not "be part of, or see, a horror movie".

I sure hope mom got over Jamie Lee's breakout role in Halloween...
#lauriestrodeisaknitter

THE STAR TREK CONNECTION

If you're a Trekkie (guilty as charged) you may have recognized the name DeForest Kelley in the plot synopsis. Yup, the dude that played Dr. "Bones" McCoy on the original *Star Trek* series in the '60s.

Funny thing though, before *Bones* took up a medical tricorder, the original show's pilot episode featured a completely different chief medical officer; Dr. Piper, played by Paul Fix, who stars along with DeForest Kelley in *Night of the Lepus*.

Now, I know the chances of an actor *not* having been in an iteration of *Star Trek* is slim at this point. But the fact that both men played a doctor on the *Enterprise* is pretty cool.

KETCHUP & DOLLHOUSES

As you can probably guess, they did not breed giant rabbits for this movie. Most of the special effect were done taking the low-tech route of miniatures.

Yup, basically we're talking putting rabbits in dollhouses, or putting them on a scaled down set (as in the scenes where they run under the power cables).

It just looks silly on all fronts and if you go through some of those scenes frame by frame you can actually tell that the rabbits are standing next to hot wheels in stead of real cars.

To make the rabbits look fierce and deadly, they used ketchup. Booping the fluffy snouts with some tomato paste was how they got them to look like bloodthirsty killers. That and their ferocious roars. Which of course were just shots of the bunnies getting sleepy and yawning.

Scenes in which rabbits attack humans, were done by actors in bunny costumes and aided by some puppeteering for close ups. In the beginning of the movie there's a scene with a little girl in a cave and it's hilarious to see the sockpuppet monstrosity doused in ketchup they used for that.

SHOULD YOU WATCH IT?

Yes. What else are you going to do this Easter? I mean, 90% of us are stuck at home anyway right now.

(on that note, stay safe my fellow cinematic masochists!)

If you're into reading, you may want to pick up the novel they loosely (VERY loosely) based the script on. It's called '*The Year of the Angry Rabbit*' by Russel Braddon. In which giant mutant rabbits run amok in Australia while the Prime Minister uses a new superweapon to dominate the planet. In this case the book is definitely better than the movie.

Directed by: William F. Claxton.

Screenplay: Don Holliday & Gene Kearney.

Based on a novel by Russell Braddon.

Cast: Stuart Whitman, Janet Leigh, Rory Calhoun, DeForest Kelley, Paul Fix, Melanie Fullerton.



RED EYED - THE COLORWAY

I started this colorway, wondering why albino rabbits have red eyes, and that's when the colorway was born. As it turns out, the iris of a rabbit's eye reflects light. Ordinarily, this light is reflected from pigments in the eye. If a rabbit has small and well-spaced melanin particles, they'll have blue eyes. Larger melanin particles lead to brown eyes. Albinism however is caused by a lack of melanin, which means that albino rabbits do not have any particles to reflect. This means that the iris reflects light straight from the blood vessels. This is what gives white rabbits their red-eyed appearance.

And even though I don't believe the folk tale that eating carrots will make your eyesight any better, I think it sure as hell makes writing more fun.

To state the obvious: this pen is not food.

IN MAY 2020 WE'LL
NEED A BIGGER BOAT...

