

CLAN OF IGORS

A MONTHLY YARN CLUB BY UNDERCOVER OTTER

MARCH 2020: THE DEADLY BEES (1966)



Vicki Robbins (Suzanna Leigh) and Ralph Hargrove (Guy Doleman).

THE PLOT

After the pressure gets too high for pop star Vicki Robbins (Suzanna Leigh) she collapses while shooting the 1960s equivalent of a music video.

Her doctor doesn't prescribe any pills and instead thinks a calming break on the picturesque Seagull Island might do the trick. Since AirBnB wasn't a thing yet, Vicki stays with beekeeper Ralph Hargrove and his chain smoking wife Mary.

Not long after Vicki arrives, a mysterious swarm of specially-bred attack bees starts killing island residents. With some sleuthing, and the help of next door neighbor H.W. Manfred, she figures out what's going on and quickly has to fight for her survival.

WRITING AND RE-WRITING

The Deadly Bees was based on the H.F. Heard novel 'a Taste for Honey' and originally the adaptation into a screenplay was done by Robert Bloch, the famed fiction writer responsible for the masterpiece 'Psycho'. In the first screenplay, Bloch adhered to the original story, in which a man named Mr. Mycroft decided to buy his honey from a different beekeeper for a change, and got into trouble with killer bees because of it.

Bloch had written the screenplay with Christopher Lee and Boris Karloff in mind for the leads (Lee playing the bad guy, as he always does so spectacularly) but both actors were unavailable (and too expensive) when shooting started.

The production company (Amicus) wasn't completely happy with the screenplay treatment Bloch gave the novel and got in writer Anthony Marriott to re-write the Bloch script. At this point Bloch had given over the project and decided not to be involved anymore. It resulted in them replacing the male lead (Mr. Mycroft) with Vicki the pop star and the script was hammed up with endless dialogue that went nowhere. There was so little left from the original Heard novel that the title of the movie (which originally shared the title with the novel) was changed to The Deadly Bees.

Robert Bloch is reputed to have been so annoyed by the interference with his script that he never bothered to see the completed film.

VERY SPECIAL EFFECTS...

Special in the Ralph from the Simpsons kinda way...

Most of the effects with swarming bees were accomplished by holding glass plates containing bees between the camera and the actors. In some scenes they just double exposed footage of bees over the footage of the actors.

In order to cover some of the actors in bees during their attacks, the crew resorted to using plastic flies that were glued to the actors faces. They tried to find fake bees, but were unable to source any of them. And at this point they had run out of funding and had to make due with whatever they could find. So plastic flies it was. You know, those little flying buddies that look NOTHING like a bee. Personally I think they could have at least had someone paint some yellow stripes on the fake flies to make it a bit less obvious...

OTHER B(EE)-MOVIES

You knew I had to put this horrible pun in somewhere right? If this movie had sparked your love for movies involving yellow and black stingers, you may want to check out the 1992 horror movie Candyman.

Personally I haven't been able to watch the entire movie in one sitting, that's how much it freaks me out. Tony Todd is amazing as the titular monster and for a 90's horror movie the production is top notch. The honeybees used in Candyman were actually handled by the same man who handled them for The Deadly Bees, Norman Gary.

In 2020 we're getting a reboot of the franchise, courtesy of Jordan Peele (yes, the Key & Peele one), who is by far one of my favorite writers in the horror genre right now. If you haven't seen Peele's previous work (Get Out, 2017 & Us, 2019), can handle horror that makes you uncomfortable, holds up a great story line and has magnificent actors in it, I urge you to look up his work.

MST3K

I'm not joking when I say The Deadly Bees is nearly unwatchable. It drags on and on, and it really has little to no redeeming qualities.

If you do want to put yourself through this movie, and make it bearable at the same time, I'd advice you to check out the Mystery Science Theater 3000 version of the movie. Mike (Nelson) and the bots make this movie a ton of fun by riffing on it.

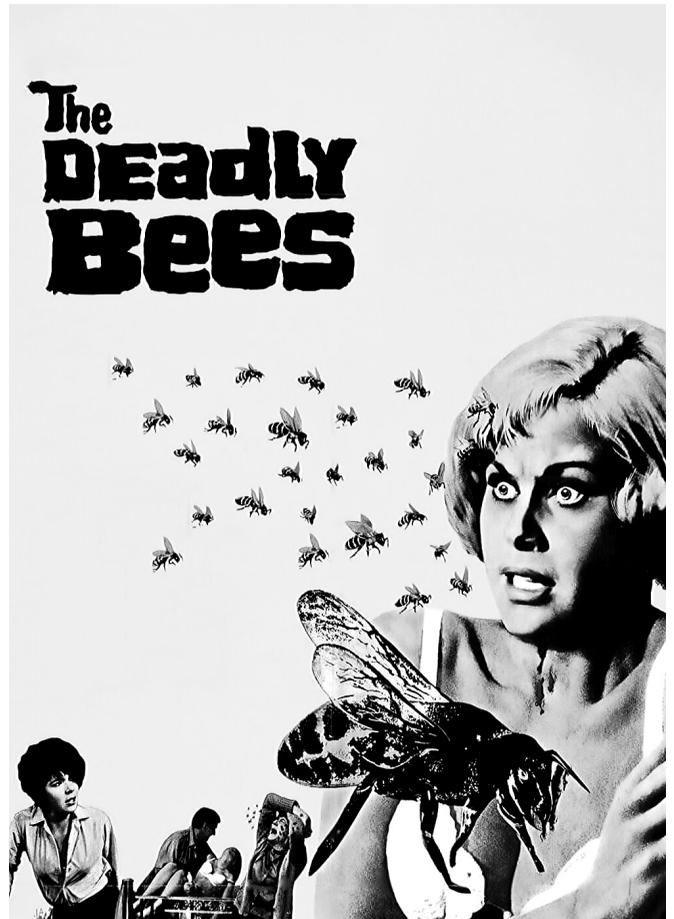
Directed by: Freddie Francis

Screenplay: Robert Bloch & Anthony Marriott.

based on the novel by H.F. Heard

Cast:

Suzanna Leigh, Frank Finlay, Guy Doleman, Catherine Finn, John Harvey.



THE SMELL OF FEAR - THE COLORWAY

I wanted to get a hold of a perfect bright yellow as the base for this colorway and after some experimenting, I'm pretty damn happy with the result!

The speckles and symbolise both the black of the bees and with the greens I've tried to capture the vibe of the experiments done with the bees to make them so deadly.

Also included this month is a cute little bee charm and flower seeds to cater to your buzzing friends. Plant them on your balcony, in the garden or do some guerrilla gardening. Polinators are extremely important to our ecosystem and the bees need all the help they can get.

IN APRIL 2020 WE'RE
HOPPING ALONG WITH...

