



The Claudia Jennings Pages

Claudia Jennings

Claudia Jennings was one of Playboy's most popular and memorable Playmates of the Year (1970). She wasted no time getting into film and quickly became the new princess, if not queen, of B movies. With roles in numerous movies and several TV guest spots, it began to look as if she would be one of the very few women who would actually turn the dubious fame of a centerfold into a real Hollywood career.

Alas, an automobile accident in 1979 took her away. But thanks to film, B-movie fans will always have the memories of their lost princess.



Films listed in chronological order

UNHOLY ROLLERS

(1972 - aka *Leader of the Pack*) dir: Vernon Zimmerman; w/ Claudia Jennings, Louis Quinn, Betty Ann Rees, Roberta Collins. A little skin.

A self-destructive, ball-busting babe claws her way up and down the Roller Derby racket. You will rarely see a purer drive-in exploitation junk-food-movie. Despite lifting its plot from any number of classy films about ambitious starlets, this flick never allows itself to climb out of the gutter for even a single frame.

Jennings is fun to watch in her role as the brassy bitch, but although she is meant to come off as tough & rebellious, she mostly just seems selfish & immature. Still, it's hard not to have fun when the flick has such uncompromisingly low standards.



GROUP MARRIAGE

(1972) dir: Stephanie Rothman; w/ Victoria Vetri, Aimée Eccles, Solomon Sturges, Claudia Jennings. A smidgen o' skin.

A troubled twosome becomes a functional foursome and they eventually grow to a compatible sixsome. Through lovers' spats, pregnancy, and the intolerance of society, they take a stand for the sanctity of communal marriage. Ya know, aside from the non-conventional plot device, this really is just an old-fashioned lightweight romantic comedy, and it does the job passably well. The cast is adequate, the script is occasionally witty, and it can even be fun to watch -- if you allow it to just be a vapid, mediocre romantic comedy.



SISTERS OF DEATH

(1972 - not released until 1978) dir: Joseph A. Mazzuca; w/ Arthur Franz, Claudia Jennings, Cheri Howell, Sherry Boucher, Paul Carr. No skin (boo, hiss); no gore.



Years after the tragedy, the survivors of a sorority initiation gone wrong are gathered for a reunion -- and trapped in the home of a man bent on vengeance. And then it proceeds pretty much like the average who's-killing-who as they drop one by one until it all ends in a rather tidy little knot of twist endings. The plot logic, amazingly, actually works on this one. Unfortunately, the flick is still just a drab low-budget suspense thing that neither succeeds nor fails. Two days after watching it, you probably won't remember ever having seen it.

TRUCK STOP WOMEN

(1974) prod & dir: Mark L. Lester; w/ Claudia Jennings, Lieux Dressler, Paul Carr, John Martino, (Uschi Digart bit). A little skin; no gore.

Anna runs a nice little truckstop, whorehouse, and truck-thieving operation, but now mobsters from the east are muscling in on her territory and her rebellious daughter (Jennings) has joined the gangsters. So now it's the Hometown Hookers versus the Big-City Slimeballs for control of the rackets on the New Mexico highways. It's a ham-fisted, almost naïve little melodrama that flies off on odd tangents every five minutes and is interrupted smack in the middle by a country-western trucker music video. But the cast is very talented and they have some great characters & dialog to work with. The flick has a sort of unwashed charm, and I confess that I actually enjoyed it at face value. And it is such a quintessential example of gutter-cinema that it should be in the dictionary as the definition of "drive-in movie".



GATOR BAIT

(1976) prod & dir: Ferd & Beverly Sebastian; w/ Claudia Jennings, Sam Gilman. Just bit o' skin; no gore.

Claudia is a Bayou poacher who gets blamed for the death of some dumb schmuck. But when the lawmen & the schmuck's inbred family wind up killing her kid sister, the hunters become the hunted, and the cagey Cajun leads her pursuers deeper & deeper into the swamp, slowly cutting off their means of escape. Okay, right off the bat, our Disbelief-Suspender gets exercised by an uneducated gator hunter with perfect hair, makeup, & fingernails. But hey, this is a fantasy. After that, what really caught me by surprise was that aside from some silly bits, this is actually a pretty good movie. It's an effective & imaginative tale of Bayou mayhem with a strong



cast & good photography. I know this thing has a reputation as a “bad movie”, but smother me with grits & pork rinds, I actually liked it.

the GREAT TEXAS DYNAMITE CHASE

(1977 - aka *Dynamite Women*) dir: Michael Pressman; w/ Claudia Jennings, Jocelyn Jones, Johnny Crawford. Plenty o’ skin; no gore.

An escaped convict with a fondness for explosives and a charming penchant for removing her clothes frequently teams up with a former bank teller for a road trip & bank robbing spree across Texas. It’s part brainless comedy, part vacuous crime drama, and mostly dull. The production quality is quite good and the cast is excellent, but the script is slow, predictable and borrows too much from *Bonnie & Clyde*. And although the nudity is nice, the over-long and semi-artsy sim-sex scenes are obviously not intended to be actually watched -- you’re supposed to be necking in the back seat during those scenes. It succeeds just well enough to be modestly diverting.



DEATH SPORT

(1978) dir: Henry Suso (aka Nicholas Niciphor) & Allan Arkosh; w/ David Carradine, Claudia Jennings, Richard Lynch. Some skin; no gore.

David & Claudia are Post-Apocalypse heroes who use big clear plastic swords that go “Zeem!” a lot. Richard is the Post-Apocalypse bad guy who wants to kill them in his gladiatorial shows. He attacks them with his “Death Machines” that go “Zoom!” a lot -- they’re really just dirt bikes with some aluminum bolted on them, but every time someone blinks, one of them blows up really pretty. And do appreciate those explosions, because they give us a brief break from the vacuous and haphazard script. The budget is miniscule, the action scenes are very poorly filmed (and consist mostly of dirt bikes going zoom), the sets are minimal (and mostly look like the basement of the county jail), the props are cheap and hastily pasted together, the soundtrack and sound fx are just wretched, and the dialogue is an otherworldly horror. Thank God Almighty that Claudia Jennings takes her clothes off.



FAST COMPANY

(1979 – Canada) dir: David Cronenberg; w/ William Smith, Claudia Jennings, John Saxon. Tidbit o' skin; no gore.

The veteran drag racer and the hot new kid are squeezed by a crooked sponsor; so they're up against corruption and deadly sabotage to run their own race. Well, it does lavish a lot of attention on fast cars and fast women, and it features a lot of authentic drag strip action. However, despite having some style and polish thanks to Cronenberg, it's a depressingly ordinary car movie with a ludicrous ending that seems designed to insult anyone over the age of five. And although second-billed, Claudia's role is small, inconsequential, and fully clothed. I imagine this flick would be good nostalgic fun for fans of the old time Funny Cars, but if you aren't thrilled by a closeup of a supercharger, you may be asleep long before the end credits roll.



A chronological filmography, with some alternate titles:

The Love Machine (1971)

The Stepmother (1971 - reissued as Impulsion in 1978)

Jud (1971)

Unholy Rollers (1972 - aka Leader of the Pack)

Sisters of Death (1972 - released in 1978)

Group Marriage (1972)

40 Carats (1973)

The Single Girls (1973 - aka Bloody Friday; Private School)

Truck Stop Women (1974)

The Man Who Fell to Earth, (1976 - uncredited bit)

Gator Bait (1976)

Moonshine County Express (1977 - aka Shine)

The Great Texas Dynamite Chase (1977 - aka Dynamite Women)

Deathsport (1978)

Fast Company (1979)



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Icon Glossary:



Good Stinker -- These are the films where a good deal of the entertainment comes from filmmaking incompetence; fun to watch in spite of themselves.



Goopy Gore -- These films exhibit distinctly above-normal quantities of unpleasantly abused body parts.



Naughty Nudie -- Films with this flag feature frequent and/or explicit nudity (almost always female) beyond that normally found in your average T&A flick.



Butt Stompin' -- These films feature at least one superior violent fight or shootout scene that will get the testosterone pumping.



Gold Star -- These are the flicks that I felt reached above their expectations or at least pleasantly surprised me; they may not always be actually good flicks, but I did find something in them worthwhile.



Blue Max Medal of Really Goodness -- These are flicks that I not only enjoyed, but I think are actually quite good films (not always the same thing).



Lethal Cinema -- These wretched viewing experiences go beyond being merely bad to become genuine sources of pain and regret; they should be avoided by all but the most masochistic trash cinema veterans. Don't say I didn't warn you.