



The Rocky Jones Pages

Rocky Jones, Space Ranger

Here's a "true confession" for ya -- I *love* this cornball Rocky Jones stuff. I didn't discover Rocky Jones until I was almost 40, but I know if I had stumbled across these flicks when I was 5 or 6, Rocky Jones would have been one of my biggest role models. He's always so cool, he's always right, and he never fails! What a guy.

Rocky Jones, Space Ranger was a low-budget but imaginative live kiddie TV show produced 1953 to 1955. Episodes were later recut & reissued as feature length adventures. The heroes are wonderful, the bad guys are outer space commies, and the sets are fabulously cheap, but somehow they make them work. On one of the ships they have doors like submarine pressure doors -- you know, with the big round wheel in the middle -- well, when they go to open the door, you can plainly see the actor rubbing his hands around the outside of the wheel, but it doesn't actually turn! Everyone runs around with rayguns, but they always end up in fist fights!



And then there's the perfect hero, Rocky Jones. This guy is *so* good -- there's one scene where he's in a room with his commanding general and the president of the whole solar system. Some crisis comes up and the bigwigs are appalled. Rocky Jones immediately tells the president to contact somebody or other, tells the general what *he* should be doing, and announces he's going to rocket off to the source of the trouble. The general and president both hop to it, "Right Rocky!" Now that's what I call an air of authority!

Rocky Jones is my hero.

in chronological order (sort of):

BEYOND THE MOON

(1953) dir: Hollingsworth Morse; w/ Richard Crane, Sally Mansfield, Robert Lyden.

I think this is the first adventure and introduces Rocky's sometimes girlfriend and cohort, Vena. Our good friends the Professor and his young ward, Bobby, get kidnapped & brainwashed by the alien Officials (I think that's how you spell it, anyhow, they're the commies -- you can tell 'cause they all wear fancy military uniforms). Rocky and his faithful copilot, Winky, save the day and uncover an evil spy right at the center of Headquarters for Space Affairs.

MENACE FROM OUTER SPACE

(1953) dir: Hollingsworth Morse; w/ Richard Crane, Sally Mansfield, Scotty Beckett.

Strange missiles from space lead Rocky to discover a new planet with incredible powers, but some old enemies and the Officials make trouble, and Rocky must save the new world from threats inside & out. This one's got more sets & special effects (including a couple space battle scenes) than most episodes -- they must have really stretched the budget. Better still, the plot is tighter, more exciting, and more coherent than in most.

MANHUNT IN SPACE

(1953) dir: Hollingsworth Morse; w/ Richard Crane, Scotty Beckett, Sally Mansfield.

Vena is stranded in space by wicked pirates! Rocky makes the Orbit Jet invisible with Professor Newton's latest doohickey! Winky sings a song! Rocky & Winky must track the pirates to their secret base -- it's no surprise that they turn out to be employed by the naughty Cleolanta, who's still so hot for Rocky that you can almost see her thighs quiver whenever his name is mentioned. This one starts out with a more intricate plot, but it ends up just going in circles -- there's a few fistfights, a little bondage, and finally the bad guys wind up on the short end of the stick. There is some extra fun -- watch real close and see the actors pressing buttons and pushing levers that don't exist; there's just a blank wall or a prop that doesn't move and the actor pretends to accomplish something.



GYPSY MOON

(1953) dir: Hollingsworth Morse; w/ Richard Crane, Scotty Beckett, Sally Mansfield, John Banner.

Rocky, Winky, Vena, Bobby, & the professor have their first encounter with the wandering moon ruled by SGT Schultz. Things get pretty sticky because SGT Sch-- I mean, King Bovaro is at war with the second moon which it wanders around with and insists that Rocky help him commit genocide. With a great deal of patience, Rocky shows that calm heads & a willingness to talk are a better way to go. However, they all have been out of contact so long, that the Space Patrol believes them dead. So the naughty Cleolanta takes advantage of the situation to launch a wicked impersonation plot. But the real Rocky shows up just in time to punch 'em all in the nose. (This is not one of the smoothest of the feature adaptations -- there are some obvious missing bits.)



SILVER NEEDLE IN THE SKY

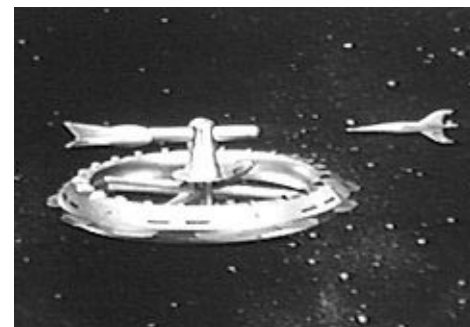
(1953 - not a theatrical compilation; the tape simply has the 3 separate chapters) dir: Hollingsworth Morse; w/ Richard Crane, Scotty Beckett, Sally Mansfield.

Rocky & crew escort some space ambassadors to a peace conference, but Cleolanta kidnaps the bigwigs! She plans to use them for a prisoner exchange, but her nefarious plans have rarely gone more wrong than in this episode. Rocky doesn't even have to save the day -- a power struggle between Cleolanta's chief lieutenants bollixes things up, and Bobby saves everyone's lives ('cause he's small enough to wriggle through the air duct). This episode is a little light on action, but tighter in plotting.

FORBIDDEN MOON

(1953) (No credits shown; this feature may not actually have been released.) dir: Hollingsworth Morse; w/ Richard Crane, Scotty Beckett, Sally Mansfield.

A mysterious force silences space station RV-5, and Rocky & his crew rocket into a desperate duel with a cunning space tyrant who is carrying a radioactive plague. Rocky gets his butt kicked! The Orbit Jet gets hijacked! Bobby makes friends with the space tyrant's bitchy big sister! Although the compilation is choppy, the plot still has more substance than usual, and the gang gets to visit two new worlds with strange & alien (matte painting)



landscapes. A pretty decent episode -- except, wait a minute... Rocky gets his butt kicked? *The Rocky Jones* loses a fistfight? What? Did we just slip into an alternate universe here? Are these people trying to destroy a kid's faith in his heroes? I demand this thing be re-edited.

And wait a minute some more... Vena convinced the enemy guard to loan her his spare uniform so she could walk free on the prison grounds? Just precisely how the hell did she persuade him to do that? I think we're missing something here...

CRASH OF MOONS

(1953) dir: Hollingsworth Morse; w/ Richard Crane, Scotty Beckett, Sally Mansfield, John Banner.

The Gypsy Moons return, but as Rocky & crew greet their old friend Sergeant Schulz -- erm, King Bovaro I mean, they discover that his moon is on a crash course with Officious! Cleolanta, the imperious head Bitch of Officious, tries to blow the moon to bits -- *before* it's been evacuated! However, thanks to a minor rebellion of Cleolanta's lieutenants and some mighty quick action by Rocky & Winky, both worlds are evacuated in time and Cleolanta learns that just maybe everyone in the galaxy is *not* her enemy. This adventure had a lot more effort in it and perhaps a bigger budget than usual -- the scenes were more elaborate and the plot was coherent, even the characters showed a little depth!



A very approximately chronological film list of Rocky Jones features:

Beyond the Moon
 Renegade Satellite
 Menace from Outer Space
 Manhunt in Space
 The Magnetic Moon
 The Gypsy Moon
 Silver Needle in the Sky

Forbidden Moon

Duel in Space

Crash of Moons

The Cold Sun

Blast Off

The Robot of Regalio

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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.