

= Laserblast =

Laserblast is a 1978 American science fiction film about an unhappy teenage loner who discovers an alien laser cannon and goes on a murderous rampage , seeking revenge against those who he feels have wronged him . The low @-@ budget film was directed by Michael Rae and produced by Charles Band , who is widely known for producing B movies . Starring Kim Milford , Cheryl Smith , and Gianni Russo , the film features notable cameo appearances by Keenan Wynn and Roddy McDowall , and marked the screen debut of actor Eddie Deezen .

The reptilian alien creatures in the film were works of stop motion animation by animator David W. Allen , marking the first chapter in a decades @-@ long history of collaboration between Allen and Band . The alien spacecraft model featured in Laserblast was designed and built by Greg Jein in two weeks , and the musical score was written in five days by Joel Goldsmith and Richard Band , the first film score for both composers .

Laserblast has received overwhelmingly negative reviews and consistently ranks among the Bottom 100 list of films on the Internet Movie Database . Many critical reviews , however , cited Allen 's stop motion animation as one of the film 's only redeeming qualities . A 1988 sequel was planned , but ultimately abandoned due to financial difficulties . Laserblast was featured in the seventh season finale of the comedy television series Mystery Science Theater 3000 , marking the show 's final episode on Comedy Central before the series moved to the Sci @-@ Fi Channel .

= = Plot = =

A green @-@ skinned man wanders through the desert with a laser cannon attached to his arm . A spaceship lands and two aliens emerge , one of whom shoots the man , which disintegrates his body . The aliens depart on their spaceship , leaving behind the laser cannon and a metallic pendant the man was wearing .

Teenager Billy Duncan wakes up in his bed , seemingly disturbed , and learns his mother is leaving for vacation . He goes to visit his girlfriend Kathy , but her deranged grandfather Colonel Farley makes him leave before he can see her . As Billy drives around town , he is harassed by bullies Chuck Boran and Froggy , and by two police deputies who give him a speeding ticket . Billy wanders into the desert and discovers the laser cannon and pendant . He starts playing with the cannon , pretending to shoot things , then realizes he can fire the weapon while wearing the pendant . Meanwhile , on the alien spacecraft , the two aliens converse with their leader who shows them footage of Billy using the cannon , prompting the aliens to turn their ship around to head back to Earth . Context implies that the two aliens , upon departing Earth , left the cannon and pendant behind under the presumption that no other human would be able to use them as the green @-@ skinned man had , but they have now learned that they were in error .

Later that night , Billy and Kathy attend a party where Chuck and Froggy attempt to rape Kathy . When Billy discovers them , a fight breaks out . Later that night , Billy uses the laser cannon to explode Chuck 's car , and Chuck and Froggy barely escape the explosion alive . Government official Tony Craig arrives to investigate both the explosion and the desert where Billy found the cannon . Tony informs the local sheriff that the town must be sealed off .

Feeling sick due to an unusual growth on his body , Billy visits Dr. Mellon , who surgically removes a metallic disc from Billy 's chest . Mellon calls the police laboratory technician Mike London to arrange for the disc to be investigated . A green @-@ skinned Billy opens fire on Mellon 's car that evening , killing him in an explosion . The next day , Tony investigates the wreckage and recovers unusual material , which he brings to Mike London , who concludes it is an alien material that cannot be destroyed .

The next day , Kathy puts the pendant on Billy 's chest while they are laying together outside . Billy immediately wakes up with green skin and deformed teeth and attacks Kathy , but she escapes . Billy goes on a rampage , shooting random objects with the laser cannon and kills one of the police deputies at a gas station . Law enforcement officials shoot at Billy from an aircraft , but Billy destroys the aircraft with the cannon , and later kills Chuck and Froggy by blowing up their car .

While Tony questions Colonel Farley and Kathy about Billy , the two aliens land on Earth and begin searching for Billy . After killing a man and stealing his van , Billy travels into a city where he randomly fires at his surroundings . Kathy and Tony arrive in the city and locate Billy , as the aliens spot Billy from atop a building and shoot him , which kills Billy and destroys the laser cannon . The aliens depart in their spacecraft and Kathy cries over Billy 's corpse .

= = Cast = =

= = Background = =

= = = Writing = = =

Laserblast was produced by Charles Band , who is widely known as a writer , producer , and director of B movies . Band described the film as a " revenge story " with a simple premise that he thought would be fun for the audience . It was Band who conceived the title of the film with the hopes that it would grab the attention of audiences .

Band said , " Most of the films that I made , that I conceived , that I was very involved with and in some cases directed , definitely started with the title and usually a piece of artwork that made sense . Then I would work back to the script and the story and make the movie . "

The script was written by Frank Ray Perilli and Franne Schacht . Elements of the story were inspired by science fiction films , such as Star Wars (1977) , and Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977) , while the characteristics of protagonist Billy Duncan ? a disenchanting middle @-@ class teen from a suburban setting ? mirror those of James Dean 's character in Rebel Without a Cause (1955) .

Band wanted Laserblast to be a " mini @-@ Star Wars " , and at one point in the film , a disparaging reference is made when Billy fires his laser gun at a Star Wars billboard , resulting in a tremendous explosion . During another scene , a police officer is confronted by a frightened teenager , who the officer dismissed as crazy by saying , " He 's seen Star Wars five times ! "

Billy is ignored and abandoned by his mother early in the film , demonstrating the dangers that can result from uncaring parents , one of the major themes of the script . The film also highlights the hypocrisy of police officers , particularly during a scene in which the two deputies smoke marijuana they obtained from teenagers . Commentators have pointed out several inaccuracies and plot @-@ holes in the Laserblast script . John Kenneth Muir raised several of these issues in his book , Horror Films of the 1970s : " How does Kathy 's dad know Craig , the government agent ? Why do the aliens leave behind the rifle and the pendant in the first place ? Why does the weapon turn its owner into a monstrous green @-@ skinned brute ? " Band explained in a 2006 interview that the more Billy uses the gun , " the more it sort of takes over his soul " . Janet Maslin , film critic with The New York Times , pointed out that originally , when Billy wakes up immediately after the aliens kill the man with the laser cannon , it appears that incident was a dream . Later , however , it turns out to have actually happened after all .

= = = Casting = = =

Kim Milford , who had previously appeared in the original Broadway theatre production of Hair and the first production of The Rocky Horror Show , starred in the leading role of Laserblast , marking his first major motion picture appearance . Cheryl Smith , who later received greater recognition for her appearances in B movies and exploitation films , appeared in the lead female role of Kathy Farley . Smith disliked the role because she felt it was poorly written and that she did not receive enough rehearsal time . Gianni Russo , best known for playing Carlo Rizzi in The Godfather (1972) , was cast in as government investigator Tony Craig .

Laserblast marked the screen debut of Eddie Deezen , who went on to play other archetypal nerd

roles in films like Grease (1978) , which was filmed before Laserblast started production , Grease 2 (1982) , and Midnight Madness (1980) . During a 2009 interview , Deezen remembered little about Laserblast , other than that it was a " shoddy production " . Roddy McDowall portrays Dr. Mellon in the film , and his name is misspelled " McDowell " in the end credits . Keenan Wynn , a long @-@ time character actor from a show business family , portrayed Colonel Farley , who provides comic relief as Kathy 's crazed , paranoid delusional grandfather and former military man . The filming for Wynn 's small role was finished in one day . Screenwriter Franne Schacht made a cameo appearance as the sheriff 's secretary in the film .

= = = Production = = =

Laserblast was directed by Michael Rae , marking his only directorial credit . Filming took place over three weekends and was made " for virtually no money " , according to producer Band . The makeup effects in the film , including the gradual discoloration and degeneration of Kim Milford , were handled by makeup artist Steve Neill , who had previously worked with Band on the science fiction film End of the World (1977) . Neill makes a cameo appearance in Laserblast as the mutated person killed by the aliens in the opening scene . Neill introduced Band to David W. Allen , the film animator who created the stop motion alien creatures in Laserblast . When Band and Neill met , the former was working full @-@ time on his fantasy film The Primevals , which was ultimately never completed . Band had developed an interest and familiarity with animation , particularly the works of Ray Harryhausen , and wanted Allen to animate the reptilian creatures for his film . Although eager to work on The Primevals , Allen said he was not yet " sufficiently mature professionally " to undertake a project of that size , and he felt Laserblast was " something that was more manageable " . Band and Allen would go on to work together on several other films and projects over the next 20 years .

The alien creatures were featured in 39 cuts of the film through five scenes . The first scene was in the beginning of the film where the aliens emerge from their spacecraft into the desert to shoot Neill 's character . Two matte set @-@ ups were used for effects , including one used to create the illusion of depth with Neill 's character in the foreground and the aliens in the background . The sequence where Neill 's character shoots the gun out of the hand of one of the aliens was done through wire @-@ supported animation . In the second and third sequences , the two aliens are on board their spaceship , which is a miniature set designed by Dave Carson . The aliens speak with their commander through a monitor in the second sequence , and animations of the commander alien were shot separately and implemented into the scene using a rear projection effect . Both sequences also used rear projection to show footage of Billy and his destruction on Earth . The fourth sequence shows the aliens on Earth , looking at a burnt @-@ out car destroyed by Billy . Footage of the car was rear projected behind the alien models ; however , the projected footage was shot at night and the scene took place between two daytime live @-@ action scenes , thus creating a continuity error in the film . The final scene is the shortest , and features a confrontation between the aliens and Billy . Matting was again used for the sequence where Billy is shot with a gun by one of the aliens from the top of a building . The aliens then fly off in their spaceship at the end of the scene through a cutout animation effect .

Randall William Cook , an animator who worked with Allen on the horror film The Crater Lake Monster (1977) , provided uncredited animation work on Laserblast . Sculptor Jon Berg , who built the alien creature puppets based on Allen 's design , was also uncredited for his work . Allen said in a 1993 article that he and Berg created more shots in the film " than originally bargained for " . Special effects were assisted by Harry Woolman , and laser effects were provided by Paul Gentry . Greg Jein , the special effects model @-@ maker who also worked on The Crater Lake Monster , designed and built the spacecraft featured in Laserblast . Jein had recently completed his work on the Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977) when Allen approached him to work on Laserblast , which was the first time Jein designed a project himself . He prepared several concept sketches and , after one was selected , he constructed the 18 @-@ inch model (46 cm) in two weeks . Allen ultimately felt his animation sequences in Laserblast were not properly integrated with the rest of the

film .

Joel Goldsmith and Richard Band , the brother of film producer Charles Band , composed the music for Laserblast , marking the first film score for both composers . The score was written in five days , and makes heavy use of synthesizer , particularly synthesized brass instruments , as well as electronic music . The music was also used in the Charles Band @-@ produced film Auditions , released the same year , the 1986 science fiction film Robot Holocaust and the 1983 horror film The House on Sorority Row . The company Echo Film Services handled the sound effects . The alien language chatter between the aliens in Laserblast was later used as sound effects in the metal band Static @-@ X 's song " A Dios Alma Perdida " , which is featured in their 2001 album Machine . During several points in the film when something explodes after it is shot by the laser gun , the scene is edited so that multiple shots of the same explosion are shown in succession . This type of editing became a trademark of Charles Band 's films , and was done previously in his 1977 films Crash ! and End of the World .

= = Release = =

= = = Reception = = =

The film was distributed by the Irwin Yablans Company , and released on March 1 , 1978 . Irwin Yablans , who later produced the first three Halloween films , specialized primarily in distributing B movies and low @-@ budget horror films . Laserblast was advertised in conjunction with End of the World , which was released the previous year and still playing theaters . At the time that Laserblast was released , audience interest in science fiction films was particularly high due to the release of Star Wars and the long wait until the release of its sequels , The Empire Strikes Back (1980) and Return of the Jedi (1983) .

Laserblast has received largely negative reviews , and consistently ranks among the Bottom 100 list of films on the Internet Movie Database . A 1978 critique in The Review of the News said , " The only thing eerie about Laserblast is the thought that the people who made this loser are still running around loose . " In the review , Laserblast was described as " an incomprehensible blending " of popular recent films like Star Wars and Close Encounters of the Third Kind , with a script " so disordered we could not be certain that the reels were being run in proper sequence " . It also criticized the props , particularly the laser gun , which they compared to a cereal box prize . A review by Variety magazine said the special effects were decent , but the script " has more holes than the laser @-@ ravaged landscape . " Janet Maslin of The New York Times said Kim Milford 's performance was dull and that the script included plot @-@ holes and inconsistencies . The Los Angeles Times critic Linda Gross said the script lacked " credibility , psychological motivation and narrative cohesiveness " , although she praised Terry Bowen 's cinematography , saying it " effectively captures the ambience of desert small @-@ town life . " It was described as one of the worst films of the year in the book , The Golden Turkey Awards .

Literary critic John Kenneth Muir felt the script had many plot @-@ holes left many unanswered questions , and that there was " little effort to forge a coherent story out of the mix " . New York Daily News writer David Bianculli described Laserblast as " numbingly bad " . In The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction Movies , Phil Hardy describes it as " a wholly unimaginative film " , adding , " Even the non @-@ stop series of exploding cars becomes monotonous in the hands of director Rae . " The Time Out Film Guide described Laserblast as a rip @-@ off of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde , and said Billy 's reign of destruction seemed random and senseless rather than driven by plot or characterization . The review called the film " the epitome of what Frank Zappa once hymned as ' cheapness . ' " The Globe and Mail writer Robert Martin called the script inept , said Steve Neill 's make @-@ up effects were " frightful rather than frightening " , and said Cheryl Smith could " barely talk , let alone act " . Martin also stated the film was pulled from a Toronto theater after showing for one week .

Not all reviews were negative . Blockbuster Entertainment gave the film three out of five stars , and

film critic Leonard Maltin gave it two @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half out of four stars . In their book about science fiction films , writers James Robert Parish and Michael R. Pitts called Laserblast " an stimulating , unpretentious little film in the same vein as I Was a Teenage Werewolf . Parish and Pitts praised the stop motion animation and the performance of Cheryl Smith . Laserblast was among several films universally considered terrible that film reviewer Michael Adams watched as part of a book about his quest to find the worst film of all time . However , Adams said he enjoyed watching it on a B movie level . Monthly Film Bulletin said that Laserblast was " Band 's first major box @-@ office success on the exploitation circuit " . According to Space.com , Laserblast has achieved cult film status . During a 2005 interview , Charles Band called the film " hilarious " and stated " it had its charm " like many films from its time . He also said that the film would have been made differently and would have had less critical reactions had it been produced with a larger budget .

Several critical reviews cited the stop motion animation as one of the film 's only redeeming qualities . Richard Meyers , a novelist who also wrote about science @-@ fiction films , described Laserblast as " basically repetitive and predictable " , but included some redemptive qualities in the animation of Dave Allen and the makeup effects of Steve Neill . Science fiction literary scholar Peter Nicholls called it the worst of Charles Band 's films , calling it " badly scripted , badly paced rubbish , " describing Allen 's " o.k. aliens " as " the only plus " . Likewise , film essayist Dennis Fischer said Allen 's stop motion animation provides the film 's " sole moments of interest " , and Cinefex publisher Don Shay called it the film 's " only viable selling points " . In their DVD & Video Guide , Mick Martin and Marsha Porter called it a " dreadful low @-@ budget film with some excellent special effects by David Allen " . Doug Pratt , who criticized the poor acting and dull dialogue , said the special effects and stop motion animation " are well executed , but the sequences without effects are fairly dumb " . The authors of The DVD @-@ Laser Disc Newsletter called the film " a dull and padded revenge @-@ against @-@ bullies tale " , but said the stop motion animation were enjoyable enough that " fans are likely to be pleased with the low @-@ budget film 's positive attributes and willing to ignore the rest " .

= = = Home media = = =

Laserblast was initially released on home video in 1981 from Media Home Entertainment . It was released on Laserdisc on June 30 , 1993 by Shadow Entertainment , and was re @-@ released on VHS on November 25 , 1997 by Full Moon Entertainment , a distribution company started by Charles Band . It had a second VHS re @-@ release on October 9 , 1998 , by United American Home Video . Laserblast was released on DVD on July 6 , 1999 , again by Full Moon Entertainment . The picture was presented with an aspect ratio of 1 @. @ 66 : 1 and a stereophonic sound . The disc included no captions and no special features except for cast profiles and trailers for other Full Moon films . Doug Pratt , a DVD reviewer and Rolling Stone contributor , said the visual presentation was better than most films from its time , with fresh colors and only a few speckles , as well as a decent sound transfer .

= = = Soundtrack = = =

The original motion picture soundtrack was released as a limited edition CD by BSX Records on August 1 , 2005 . It consisted of about 46 minutes of music over 25 tracks . SoundtrackNet reviewer Mike Brennan said it was " actually quite enjoyable in parts " , but not the type of music meant to be listened to without the film . Brennan claimed it resembled some of the later and better @-@ known works of Joel Goldsmith , like the scores of Stargate SG @-@ 1 and Stargate Atlantis . Joe Sikoryak of Film Score Monthly gave the soundtrack one @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of five , claiming that about one @-@ third of the album sounded like " generic rock ' n ' roll cues for a production unable to afford licensing existing songs " .

= = = Sequel = = =

Band originally planned to produce a sequel called Laserblast II , with production work to begin in August 1986 and a theatrical release expected to follow shortly thereafter . A tagline released for the film read , " The ultimate alien weapon is back . " When plans for the sequel were announced , Atlanta @-@ based film critic Scott Journal wrote , " I am one of the few people in the world who saw the original and , believe me , it did not merit a followup . " However , Charles Band Productions fell into financial difficulties shortly after the production of Laserblast , and the project was eventually scrapped . However , the premise and elements of the abandoned sequel were later used in the 1988 Charles Band film , Deadly Weapon , which , like Laserblast , was about a bullied teenager who finds a powerful weapon and uses it to seek revenge against his enemies . Band continued to make films and eventually formed Empire Pictures .

= = Mystery Science Theater 3000 = =

Laserblast was featured in the seventh season finale episode of Mystery Science Theater 3000 , a comedy television series . In the show , the human character Mike Nelson and his two robot friends , Crow T. Robot and Tom Servo , are trapped in a satellite and forced to watch bad films as part of an ongoing scientific experiment . Laserblast was the sixth episode of the seventh season , which was broadcast on Comedy Central May 18 , 1996 . It marked the final episode of Mystery Science Theater 3000 on that network , before the series moved to the Sci @-@ Fi Channel for its eighth season . At the time of broadcast , the MST3K creators did not know the show would eventually be renewed at a different network . Mary Jo Pehl , an actress and writer with the show , felt Laserblast was a particularly bad film : " The lead guy , Kim Somebody , is another sterling example of how filmmaking is not a meritocracy . The fact that this film was even made proves that ' anybody can do it . ' You can find this either inspiring or depressing . "

During the riffing of the film , the robot character Crow T. Robot claims the film " was run through a highly technical process called ' tension extraction ' " , and the other robot Tom Servo calls it so dull , " There 's a point where it stops being a movie " . Mike and the robots make particular note of film critic Leonard Maltin 's relatively high two and @-@ a @-@ half star rating of the original film . The episode also makes several references to McDowall 's performances in the Planet of the Apes films , and makes several jokes at the expense of Deezen and his stereotypically nerdy character , at one point dubbing him " heir to the Arnold Stang fortune " . Mike and the robots repeatedly sang " Are You Ready for Some Football ? " whenever Deputy Ungar appeared on screen due to his resemblance to country singer Hank Williams , Jr .

The Laserblast episode was included in the 2008 DVD box @-@ set " Mystery Science Theater 3000 : 20th Anniversary Edition " , along with episodes featuring the films First Spaceship on Venus (1960) , Werewolf (1996) and Future War (1997) . They were also made available for instant online streaming through the Internet rental site , Netflix . Dan Cziraky of Cinefantastique , wrote , " If you 've never seen Laserblast , this is perfect MST3K viewing ! It typifies everything wrong with the late ' 70s . " During a 2009 interview , Eddie Deezen said he loved the show 's parody of Laserblast .