

CLASSIC CREATURE FEATURES ... OR NOT?

For stalwart film fans, they're titles that seem oddly familiar, conjuring up images of timeworn drive-in double features and bargain basement B-movie fare. Names like *Cave Women on Mars*. *Terror From Beneath the Earth*. *The Monster of Phantom Lake*. In fact, viewers could be forgiven for thinking at first glance these cut-rate, black-and-white affairs are long-forgotten cult flicks. They'd be mistaken, however, as all of the motion pictures are contemporary productions from eccentric entrepreneur Christopher R. Mihm, a Minnesota-based wunderkind who devotes every second of his spare time to re-creating vintage sci-fi cinema.

"I make new 'old' films," says the 35-year-old auteur, who since 2006 has released a new feature each year. "Because I'm trying to more or less accurately emulate those old low-budget styles, my filmmaking style can best be described as 'fast.' I like to limit the number of takes I'll do of any shot. Movie-makers didn't have a lot of money back then and film was expensive, so sometimes they just had to take whatever they got. Plus, by limiting myself a little bit (and purposely flying by the seat of my pants), it forces me to make do with whatever I get, which adds to the authenticity."

That faithfulness is evident through threadbare sets, shoddy special effects, pretentious dialogue, and intentionally

mediocre monsters. Yet Mihm—who writes, directs, and edits all of his pictures—somehow manages to instill within each adventure a captivating sense of wonder and genuine love for the genre.

"The first thing I tell every actor is to not deliberately act badly: I want everyone to give me the best they have," he explains, insisting that the movies are meant as serious homages rather than parodies. "I make sure that the actors give me 100 percent of their acting ability, and then let the cheesiness of the surroundings and the lines they're delivering be the joke. I mean, the monster costume may be made out of painted garbage bags and be totally ridiculous, but in the world of that film that monster will kill their character, and they have to play it as such."

His latest opus, *Attack of the Moon Zombies*, is set to premiere at a gala screening on May 25 in Minneapolis, followed by film festival showings and a DVD release. More details about all of Mihm's productions, along with the opportunity to sign on as an "associate producer," can be found at www.sainteuphoria.com.



SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH SPOCK

There's a fun scene in *Star Trek IV* where, after landing a cloaked Klingon starship in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, Captain Kirk reminds his crew to "remember where we parked." There probably aren't too many Birds of Prey hiding in Woodlawn Park in Portland, Oregon—though, since the vessels are invisible, one can never know for sure—but thanks to the efforts of Adam Rosko and his Atomic Arts theater ensemble (www.atomic-arts.org), each summer the landscape teems with Trekkers watching live-action re-enactments of classic *Star Trek* TV episodes.

"We thought it would be fantastic to do a space adventure outdoors, free to the public a la 'Shakespeare in the Park,' all the while staying very true to the spirit of *Star Trek*," says the 25-year-old producer, who staged his first performance, "Amok Time," in the summer of 2009. "We opened to an overwhelmingly warm response from the audience, and by the end of our run the park was packed with people trying to get a spot to see the show. The next summer we returned with

"Space Seed" to an even bigger turnout and response. We've set out to do five summers (a five-year mission), so we plan to produce three more. Every summer we hope to make the show bigger and better."

This season's presentation, a word-for-word re-creation of "Mirror, Mirror," is set to debut in the Woodlawn Park amphitheater at 5 PM on Saturday July 9, with subsequent performances scheduled each weekend throughout the month. Despite a meager budget and minimal set pieces (primarily a captain's chair, a doorway, and a few seats for the bridge crew), each production emphasizes the cast's admiration of, and deep

appreciation for, the stories and characters.

"We strive to maintain the feel of the series and not change anything for the sake of changing it," emphasizes Rosko. "We respect the material and play it straight. I think a lot of people were expecting us to

'camp it up' a bit, but there's more enjoyment to be had seeing the stories genuinely performed and the humor coming naturally from the great situations and characters."

While there's no cost to attend, the space fills up quickly, so arriving early is recommended. Just make sure to remember where you parked your starship.

