

Snakes on a Plane

Film Review by Kam Williams

Campy Fright Flick Loads of Fun in Spite of Cheesy F/X
and Cliché-Ridden Script



Benefiting from the best pre-release hype since The Blair Witch Project, the Internet has been abuzz about this picture practically since the day the project was greenlighted by New Line. In fact, the blogisphere actually influenced its director, David Ellis, to do five days of re-shoots to add R-rated scenes not in his original PG-13 script because his growing legion of fans had come to expect them due to the phenomenal popularity of a parody. This electronic word of mouth might have been unnecessary anyway, given that "Snakes on a Plane" represents a rare case of cinematic truth-in-advertising. For between the self-explanatory title and its high-octane trailers, one can readily discern exactly what this campy cross of the disaster and horror genres is all about. The fun starts inside the already claustrophobic quarters of a cramped commercial airliner where the motley assortment of mostly annoying passengers filing in are about to get even more aggravated. Unabashedly politically-incorrect in terms of relying on simplistically-drawn stereotypes, every character here is easily recognizable. There's the self-important, trash-talking gangsta rapper (Flex Alexander) with a couple of bully, path-clearing bodyguards (Kenan Thompson and Keith Dallas), the spoiled-rotten debutante (Rachel Blanchard) sporting one of those lapdogs you could dust with, the effete coward (Gerard Plunkett), the doting mother (Elsa Pataky) with the whining baby, two young brothers (Daniel Hogarth and Casey Dubois) traveling alone, a couple (Emily Holmes and Tygh Runyan) in heat eager to join the mile-high club, etcetera. Even the crew members are all obvious archetypes, from the effeminate flight attendant (Bruce James) to the bimbo blonde stewardess (Sunny Mabrey) to the fanny-pinching pilot (David Koechner) to the selfless stewardess (Julianna Margulies) on her last flight before law school who somehow summons up courage she never knew she had. The bad attitudes in the cabin start even before the jet leaves the ground, when everyone in first-class, just prior to takeoff, is informed that they've just been bumped back to coach to make way for FBI Agent Neville Flynn (Samuel L. Jackson) and eyewitness Sean Jones (Nathan Phillips). Flynn's been assigned to escort the flaky surfer dude from Hawaii to Los Angeles to ensure his safe arrival in court to testify in the murder trial of Eddie Kim (Byron Lawson), a vicious mob boss. What nobody knows, of course, is that Kim has hatched a plan to crash the 747 by stowing a crate of venomous snakes aboard timed to be released while the jet is 30,000 feet in the air over the Pacific Ocean. Fortunately, as patently absurd as this premise sounds, Snakes on a Plane does not disappoint. Samuel L. Jackson enjoys his best outing in years as a boiling badass who loses his composure as soon as all hell breaks loose. His character is prone to blurting out urgent, anticipated non-sequiturs like "I've had it with these mother-[expletive] snakes on this mother-[expletive] plane!" which elicit big laughs from the Internet-prepped audience. As for the special effects, they were created via a convincing enough combination of computer-generated imagery and over 400 real snakes. Furthermore, inventive director Ellis comes up with an array of increasingly humorous and amusing if simultaneously shocking and disgusting ways to dispatch victims as the body-count rises. Tautly

edited, these grisly killings are well-concealed and arrive accompanied by a well-synchronized, thunderous burst from the score designed to elicit screams as you jump out of your skin. Thus, although the film is filled with humorous asides and targeted at teenagers, be forewarned that it easily earns its well-deserved R rating, due to all the gratuitous gore, nudity, sex and eroticized-violence. Best horror flick since Dawn of the Dead.

Excellent (4 stars)

Rated PG-13 for sexual references

Running time: 105 minutes

Studio: New Line Cinema

Arts & Entertainment with Kam Williams. www.awarenessmagazine.net/kamae.html