

Troll 2

Subjects: Cultural Studies

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Troll 2 is a 1990 horror film directed by Claudio Fragasso (under the pseudonym Drake Floyd) and starring Michael Stephenson, George Hardy, Margo Prey, Connie McFarland, Deborah Reed, and Jason Wright. Produced under the title Goblins and conceived as a horror film with elements of comedy, the American producers and distributors were skeptical about its chances to succeed, and decided to market it as a sequel to the 1986 horror film Troll. However, the two films have no connection, and this movie features no trolls. The plot concerns a family pursued by vegetarian goblins who seek to mutate them into plants so that they can eat them. Production was rife with difficulties, largely due to the language barrier between the Italian-speaking crew and English-speaking cast, and producer Joe D'Amato's approach to low-budget film making. The resulting film is considered by some as one of the worst movies ever made. In subsequent years, the film gained a cult following and garnered a large fanbase. Though generally viewed as a poorly made horror, the filmmakers stated that it was "always intended to be a comic film". In 2009, Stephenson, the child star of the film, directed a critically acclaimed documentary about its production and subsequent popularity, humorously titled Best Worst Movie.

Keywords: horror film ; cult ; documentary

1. Plot

Michael Waits has always dreamed of being a farmer, and arranges a home exchange vacation in which he and his family will move into a house in the rural farming community of Nilbog ("goblin" spelled backwards) for a month. The night before the family is scheduled to leave, Michael's son Joshua is contacted by the ghost of his dead grandfather, Seth, warning him that vegetarian goblins want to mutate him and his family into plants so that they can eat them. Seth tells Joshua that goblins can mutate people into plants by feeding them poisoned food or drink.

Meanwhile, Joshua's sister, Holly, receives a visit from her boyfriend Elliot Cooper. Holly accuses Elliot of being a homosexual since he seems to prefer spending time with his friends. Elliot promises to show his devotion by accompanying the family on vacation.

The next morning, Elliot fails to arrive and the family leaves without him; they encounter him en route to Nilbog, riding in an RV with his friends Arnold, Drew, and Brent. Outside of Nilbog, Seth appears as a hitchhiker, who warns Joshua that Nilbog is the kingdom of the goblins, and that if his family eats anything while they are there, they will be mutated into plants. The family disbelieves Joshua's warnings and continue on to Nilbog, where they meet their strange and aloof exchange family, the Presents. There, Joshua sets about destroying all of the food the family finds or acquires, such as by urinating over a feast prepared for them, with the help of Seth's ghost.

Arnold goes for a walk outside of Nilbog and encounters a girl being chased by goblins. When Arnold approaches them and insults them, they respond by throwing a spear into his chest. They flee to a chapel in the woods, where they encounter the goblins' queen, Druid Witch Creedence Leonore Gielgud, who uses the "Stonehenge Magic Stone" to give the goblins power. Creedence tricks them into drinking a magic potion that dissolves the girl into vegetable matter, a horrifying scene witnessed by Arnold that prompts him to scream helplessly only to be mutated into a tree.

The following morning, Michael and Joshua venture into town to buy some food, as there is none in their holiday home. When in town, they find the general store closed, and Michael falls asleep on a bench. Joshua enters the local Church and eavesdrops on a goblin church sermon, which bewails the "evils" of eating meat. The parishioners capture him after seeing his skateboard roll into the church and attempt to force feed him poisonous ice cream; Michael walks in on the scene and becomes suspicious, taking Joshua home.

Later, Drew goes to the town because there are no food or drinks in the RV. The sheriff Gene Freak takes him in his car and gives him a green hamburger. When he arrives in the town, Drew goes to the store and the owner offers him poisonous Nilbog milk. Feeling dizzy, he goes to a chapel and finds Arnold, who has mutated into a tree. Drew drags him out, but Creedence appears. She knocks him out and chainsaws Arnold into pieces. Drew is then killed off-screen.

At the house, the family discover that the townspeople have prepared them a surprise party to apologize for the events at the church. Joshua attempts to make contact with Seth, only for Creedence to appear in goblin form through the mirror, and attacks Joshua. Seth's ghost appears and chops her hand off with an axe. Creedence returns to her chapel, where she mutates herself into a beautiful woman in revealing clothes; she then travels to Elliot's RV, where she seduces Brent and drowns him in popcorn.

During the party, Seth and Joshua try to cause a distraction using a Molotov cocktail, however the Priest captures them, takes the cocktail, and recites a spell that banishes Seth's soul to Hell. However, before he vanishes, Seth summons a bolt of lightning from the sky, which ignites the cocktail and kills the Priest in a fiery explosion. When Michael extinguishes his burning corpse, his true Goblin form is revealed, and the villagers turn on the Waits, revealing themselves all as Goblins. The Waits and Elliot then retreat to the house, where the villagers surround them and hold them hostage.

Joshua, Elliot, Holly, Michael and Diana hold a séance to communicate with Seth, who returns from the dead and tells them that he can retain a physical form for exactly ten minutes before he has to return to the afterlife. Seth gives Joshua a paper bag containing a "secret weapon" to use against the goblins. The goblins break into the house and transport Joshua to Creedence's chapel, where Joshua opens the bag, revealing a "double-decker Bologna sandwich". He eats the sandwich, making his body poisonous to the goblins; he then touches the Stonehenge Stone, along with his family and Elliot, which destroys Creedence and all of the Goblins present.

The family returns home, where Joshua's mother is seen eating food from the refrigerator. The food, unknown to the family, has been poisoned by the family of goblins which is very likely to be the Presents family, who took over their home during their exchange in the country. Joshua walks in on a group of goblins eating his mother's green, bloated torso off of the kitchen counter and offering him a bite. Joshua screams in horror.

2. Cast

- Michael Stephenson as Joshua Waits
- George Hardy as Michael Waits
- Margo Prey as Diana Waits
- Connie McFarland as Holly Waits
- Robert Ormsby as Grandpa Seth
- Deborah Reed as Creedence Leonore Gielgud
- Jason Wright as Elliot Cooper
- Darren Ewing as Arnold
- Jason Steadman as Drew
- David McConnell as Brent
- Gary Carlston as Sheriff Gene Freak
- Mike Hamill as Bells
- Don Packard as Sandy Mahar
- Christina Reynolds as Cindy
- Glenn Gerner as Peter
- Michelle Abrams as Wood Tales Girl
- Lance C. Williams as Mr. Presents
- Elli Case as Mrs. Presents
- Gavin Reed as Presents Son
- Melissa Bridge as Presents Daughter
- Patrick Gibbs as Goblin (uncredited)
- Paul Gibbs as Goblin (uncredited)
- Hermann Weiskopf as Man (uncredited)

3. Production

The script—originally titled *Goblins*^[1]—began as a way for director Claudio Fragasso's wife, Rosella Drudi, to express her frustration with several of her friends becoming vegetarians, which she claimed "pissed [her] off".^[2] The film was produced by Eduard Sarlui and Joe D'Amato, an Italian exploitation film director notorious for his stated view that the profitability of films was more important than their entertainment value. D'Amato worked under the pseudonym "David Hills". In keeping with D'Amato's production philosophy, many components of the film were created for little to no money, such as the costumes that were designed by D'Amato's longtime friend and frequent collaborator Laura Gemser.^[3]

The film was shot on location in Morgan and Porterville, Utah in the summer of 1989; a large "M" erected in the mountains outlying Morgan is visible in some shots. The production crew was made up almost entirely of non-English-speaking Italians brought to America by Fragasso; the only fluent English speaker on set was Gemser. Fragasso and his crew largely relied on a broken pidgin English to communicate with the cast, who recalled not being able to understand much of what went on.^[1]

The cast had few experienced actors, and was primarily assembled from residents of nearby towns who responded to an open casting call, hoping to win roles as extras. George Hardy was a dentist with no acting experience who showed up for fun, only to be given one of the film's largest speaking roles. Don Packard, who played the store owner, was actually a patient at a nearby mental hospital, and was cast for—and subsequently filmed—his role while on a day trip. He later recalled that he had smoked an enormous amount of marijuana prior to filming, had no idea what was happening around him, and that his disturbed "performance" in the film was not acting.^[2]

Drudi and Fragasso have stated that their intentions have been misunderstood, as the strongly criticized aspects of the movie are intentionally comic and exaggerated, such as Creedence's theatrical acting or the preacher's monologue on eating meat.^[4]

As neither Fragasso nor Drudi spoke fluent English, the shooting script was written in the same broken dialect in which they both spoke; the cast would later recall that the script was only given to them scene-by-scene, and that they had difficulty understanding their dialogue as written. Some of the cast members offered to correct their lines to sound more grammatically and syntactically correct, but said that Fragasso demanded they deliver their lines verbatim.^[2] Despite the majority of the cast ascribing to the same story, Fragasso has vehemently denied their version of events, and once reacted angrily to a panel discussion being conducted by the cast, calling the actors "dogs" (Italian for "bad actors"^[5]) and accusing them of lying about their experiences.^[2]

3.1. Soundtrack

The film's soundtrack was composed by Carlo Maria Cordio and was played entirely on Roland D-50 and Korg M1 synthesizers, consisting of a few brief themes repeated over and over, including a sped-up M1 demo track. In 2017, the complete score was released on CD, LP and cassette by Lunaris Records. **Script error: No such module "Track listing".**

4. Reception

Troll 2 is widely considered to be of exceptionally poor quality, and has come to be regarded by the public as one of the worst films ever made. On Rotten Tomatoes, the film holds an approval rating of 5% based on 21 reviews, with a weighted average rating of 2.44 out of 10. The critical consensus simply reads "Oh my God" in reference to the film's most famous (or infamous) scene.^[6] The acting and dialogue have become notorious for their camp value. The scene in which Darren Ewing's character states that he will be eaten next has become an Internet meme,^[7] often appearing in videos alongside the "Garbage Day" meme from *Silent Night, Deadly Night Part 2*. In terms of audience participation, *Troll 2* has been compared to the film *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, and the two films have been screened together.^[8]

In 2007, a major *Troll 2* event took place in Morgan called "Nilbog Invasion".^[9]

5. Home Media

In 2003, the film was released on DVD by MGM in a Dual Layer version, packaged with the first 1986 *Troll* film, under the title *Troll/Troll 2*.^[10] MGM rereleased *Troll 2* on DVD and Blu-ray in the United States on October 5, 2010 in honor of the 20th anniversary of the film's release.^[11] Scream Factory released a double feature Blu-ray of *Troll* and *Troll 2* on November 17, 2015. The first 5,000 copies included a DVD of *Best Worst Movie*, the documentary about the production and legacy of *Troll 2*.^[12]

6. Documentary

The child star of *Troll 2*, Michael Stephenson, directed *Best Worst Movie*, a documentary about the film and its cult status.^[13] The film debuted on March 14, 2009, at the Alamo Drafthouse South Lamar in *Austin, Texas*, as part of the South by Southwest film festival. Several cast members from *Troll 2* attended the premiere. The screening was followed by a showing of *Troll 2*.^[14] The documentary also screened at major film festivals across the world including the AFI Fest and Sheffield Doc/Fest. A screening at the Tower Theater in Salt Lake City included appearances from much of the cast.^{[15][16]}

The film won Best Feature Documentary (as voted by the official jury), as well as the Audience Choice for Best Documentary Feature at the 11th annual Sidewalk Moving Picture Festival in September 2009.^[17] It was released in spring 2010^[18] and distributed by Area 23 A.^[19]

ABC's *Nightline* ran a segment on *Troll 2* and *Best Worst Movie* in May 2010, including interviews with Hardy and Stephenson.^[20]

7. Sequel

After *Troll 2* was released on home video, some regional distributors continued to build on the success of the previous *Troll*, distributing two other films as sequels: *The Crawlers* (also known as *Troll 3* or *Contamination .7*) and *Quest for the Mighty Sword*. The latter film, featuring a hobgoblin using the same goblin suit from *Troll 2*, was also known as *Troll 3* (in Germany, it was released as *Troll – Das Schwert der Macht* and *Troll – Teil 3*).

At the Nilbog Invasion, Fragasso and writer Drudi announced plans for a sequel to *Troll 2*, and the audience was polled for their opinion on what the film should be called. The winning title was *Troll 2: Part 2*. Fragasso later asked Stephenson to appear in the sequel.^[21] However, in 2009, Fragasso said he was no longer interested in directing the film.^[8]

The official sequel to *Troll 2* was finally released for rent on Amazon Prime Video and DVD/Blu-ray on October 6, 2020, entitled *Under ConTroll*. This film sees George Hardy reprise his role as Michael Waits and stars Eva Habermann as Vanessa Majer, a woman who is possessed by a troll.^{[22][23]} The film was directed by Eric Dean Hordes, who co-wrote the screenplay with Alexander König and Simon Hauschild.

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