



This Week: *Beastmaster II*

Okay, everybody listen up. I'm only going to explain this once, so if you miss it, you're screwed. The reason I'm reviewing a sequel without reviewing the original is mostly fashion sense. The first *Beastmaster* was a lengthy, kinda dull movie. It was a serious sword 'n' sorcery flick, with much flexing of muscle and casting of spells. Also, there was a problem with the animals... but that's a long story for the activists to scream about.

Beastmaster 2: Through the Portal of Time has the honour of being the longest title in *Turkey Dinner* history. It's a tongue-in-cheek romp across deserts and swamps and zoos and freeways, as Dar the Beastmaster tries to track down a Master of Evil named Arklon.

Well, did I say it was Shakespeare?

The fun begins five minutes into the credits, when Dar is sentenced to die. Since grammar is not his strong suit, he gets loose and spells doom for the guards trying to stop him. In the ensuing Fight Scene, we get to thrill to the pulse-pounding action of Dar smacking a priest in the face with an axe. Klong! Ha ha ha, ha-ha! We are also introduced to Arklon, the wonderfully schizoid bad guy, whose main weapon is a nifty special effects generator called the Key of Magog (look, I didn't write this stuff, okay?). The Key, which looks like the receiver of a princess telephone welded to a glockenspiel mallet, has several interesting properties. It shoots beams of puke-green energy, big green fireballs, and windstorms which are, of course, green. It also has the ability to open a nifty little dimensional door called the Portal of Time. Using the key, Arklon can go Through the Portal (of Time) and bring back a neutron detonator (a pint-size nuclear device capable of blowing half to world into the ionosphere) with

which he can rule unopposed, forever! HA HA HA HA!

But before he goes through, a smart-talking, streetwise girl and her red Porsche come through from our world. She hooks up with Dar, they spout a few one-liners, eat a few roots, do a couple of sight gags, and then she gets kidnapped by Arklon. Dar confronts Arklon just as

he goes Through the Portal with the secret that the two of them are brothers (didn't you see that coming?). Arklon is shocked; he'd never even suspected. He shouldn't feel bad, though, since Dar only just found out himself (he was briefed on his family tree by a helpful swamp thing which, as it turns out, was also related to him).

And so Arklon, Dar the Beastmaster, and Laurana the buxom witch all end up in downtown L.A. on a summer weekend. It's Party Time! As Dar and his animals get interrogated by the police, Arklon shoots up a fashion boutique and nearly kills the little fey that runs it. Then Dar escapes the cops and hooks up with Jackie, the kid with the Porsche (though now she's driving a Mercedes) while Arklon and Laurana swipe a neutron detonator and accidentally arm it. The whole world has less than a half hour to live! Then, a long and interesting chase ensues, culminating in a tense showdown at the Adventure Island Zoo's circus ring. I'm not going to tell you who wins in the end, but since we're not all drifting through the ozone layer, I'll bet you can guess.

Technical notes: this is not as badly acted as some movies I've reviewed. Marc Singer does

the same solid job he did in the original, actually managing to make you like Dar the Beastmaster. His "barbarian in Downtown L.A." shtick will set the standard for all future accidental time travellers. Wings Hauser does a great job as Arklon the Bad Guy. Cackling villainously, blowing bras off mannequins, turning on his allies without any warning, and spouting great evil one-liners the whole time, Arklon makes it plain that he's having one hell of a good time being evil. The only weak character here is Jackie Trent (no, I did not make that up), the Streetwise Punk With a Soft Spot For Our Hero. I liked her, but when I watched this movie with some friends they groaned and booed every time Jackie opened her mouth.

Of course, the animals steal every scene they're in. Kodo and Podo (a pair of ferrets) are too cute to be believed. Ruh, the tiger, is suitably impressive. The eagle is also a nice touch. The noise for all these critters is supplied by veteran animal imitator Frank Welker, who is best known for characters like Furball on *Tiny Toons*.

Scenes To Watch For: The high points are: the fight scene at the beginning; Arklon and the fey clothing store manager and the subsequent decimation of the salon; any scene with the

ferrets in it; any scene with Arklon in it; the scene with Dar being interrogated by the Chief of police; and the climactic fight scene at the end, where Dar and Arklon fight it out in a circus ring while a tape of the ringmaster's spiel plays in the background.

Favourite Line: The aforementioned tape, which has been underlining the whole fight with oddly apt comments about a Lion and a Tasmanian hedgehog suddenly says, at a most inappropriate time, "Let's see if we can get them to kiss!" You should also watch the whole movie very carefully, since there are high-quality one-liners throughout. Is funny, ya? Ya!

Judgement (boy, I'm sick of writing that!): Good, clean, dumb, fun, with enough violence to keep the kids happy but not enough to upset parents. One caution: the movie contains the word "asshole" in a few very apt places, and kids love words like that, so if you don't want little Calvin calling Father Flaherty an asshole, you should talk to them afterwards.

Available: Just about anywhere.

Next Week:
I'll surprise you.

TRENT DRAKE