

Blu-Ray Review: Original 1981 ‘Clash of the Titans’ Deserves Better Re-Release

Submitted by [mattmovieman](#) [1] on March 9, 2010 - 4:00pm

- [Blu-ray Review](#) [2]
- [Clash of the Titans](#) [3]
- [Desmond Davis](#) [4]
- [Harry Hamlin](#) [5]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [6]
- [King Kong](#) [7]
- [Laurence Olivier](#) [8]
- [Maggie Smith](#) [9]
- [Matt Fagerholm](#) [10]
- [Ray Harryhausen](#) [11]
- [Theater, TV, DVD & Blu-Ray](#) [12]

CHICAGO – The Winter Olympics coverage on NBC made it impossible for viewers to ignore the fact that there is indeed a “Clash of the Titans” remake coming out in April. This may seem redundant, since the vast majority of modern fantasy has in some way ripped off Greek mythology. Both “Harry Potter” and “Percy Jackson” include a variation on Medusa, the reptilian villain with snake hair and a stoney stare.

Medusa has been giving young moviegoers nightmares for decades, thanks to Ray Harryhausen, whose distinctive stop-motion effects have enhanced cinema since the early 40s. Their herky-jerky movement has a life and immediacy that simply can’t be mimicked by today’s all-too-fluid CGI. 1981’s “Titans” marked the last time Harryhausen served as “special visual effects creator.” It’s a tribute to his mastery that the film still has a timeless grandeur, despite the fact that its effects now seem to have been created in the cinematic stone age.



The film is a classic adventure epic with a youthful “chosen one” (played by a relative unknown, Harry Hamlin) backed by a star-studded ensemble. No film with the credit, “and Laurence Olivier as Zeus,” can be taking itself that seriously, and director Desmond Davis infuses the material with a delightfully cornball spirit (think “Star Wars,” but with more nudity and beheadings). Hamlin is Perseus, the favored son of Zeus (Olivier), whose attempts to win the heart of Princess Andromeda (Judi Bowker) anger the god Thetis (Maggie Smith), since her deformed son Calibos (Neil McCarthy) was originally engaged to Her Royal Loveliness. Thus, Perseus must battle creatures ranging from the archery pro Medusa and cannibalistic blind witches to an excitable two-headed dog and the towering monster known as the Kraken.



Harry Hamlin and Judi Bowker star in Desmond Davis's 1981 fantasy classic Clash of the Titans.
Photo credit: Warner Home Video

Though Harryhausen’s creature effects never quite seem to be interacting with the live-action characters, their movement and detail are quite extraordinary to behold (this is especially true of Perseus’s flying horse, Pegasus). With his arching eyebrows and blank expression, Hamlin never exudes an air of heroism (his glazed eyes would be more well-suited for a villain). Yet the rest of the cast is having a ball, from gods Claire Bloom and Ursula Andress fretting about in togas, to sidekick/mentor Burgess Meredith, who resembles his “Rocky” character so closely that you half-expect him to instruct Perseus to “Eat lightning and s—t thunder!” There’s also a campy thrill in watching Olivier bellow, “Let loose the Kraken!”, a word all the actors deliver with relish. And the great Smith brings formidable gravity to the silliest dialogue, even when she’s playing a disembodied stone head.



Clash of the Titans was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on March 2nd, 2010.

Photo credit: Warner Home Video

"Clash of the Titans" is presented in its 1.85:1 aspect ratio and accompanied by English, Spanish, French, Dutch, Italian, Portuguese, Castellano and Czech audio tracks. The disc automatically starts with a five-minute preview of Louis Leterrier's remake, highlighting the cutting-edge computerized effects that are set to pop out in 3D. It makes one wonder if Davis's film was re-released merely to prove that a remake was necessary. By Blu-Ray standards, the picture quality is truly awful, bringing clarity to the film grains instead of the images (which are further marred by splotchy color). Some films simply were not made for Blu-Ray, and this is clearly one of them; the stop-motion effects would actually benefit from being viewed on a weathered VHS instead.

Connected to the case is a series of pictures and cast/crew biographies that are fun to look through, though it's a shame they didn't come in a separate pull-out booklet. The only extras offered on the disc (a featurette and seven mini-profiles of key animated characters) are extracted from an interview with Harryhausen, who reveals some enlightening tidbits, such as why he prefers envisioning the past rather than the future. He says that his own influences included French artist Gustave Doré and stop-motion master Willis O'Brien (of "King Kong"). A daunting challenge facing Harryhausen was the task of matching action between live action close-ups and stop-motion wide shots, particularly those involving Calibos (whose character originally had no dialogue). The effects wizard also says that he tried to improve on the effects in "Kong," by not allowing the fur on his characters to shift when moving them between frames. Harryhausen's belief in using cinema as a gateway to fantasy is pure and endearing, and his crowning achievement deserved far better treatment on Blu-Ray.

'Clash of the Titans' is released by Warner Home Video and stars Harry Hamlin, Judi Bowker, Burgess Meredith, Neil McCarthy, Maggie Smith, Claire Bloom, Ursula Andress, Flora Robson, Jack Gwillim and Laurence Olivier. It was written by Beverley Cross and directed by Desmond Davis. It was released on March 2nd, 2010. It is not rated.



[13]

By [MATT FAGERHOLM](#) [14]

Staff Writer

HollywoodChicago.com

matt@hollywoodchicago.com [13]

Source URL (retrieved on Apr 25 2024 - 12:19pm):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/10113/blu-ray-review-original-1981-clash-of-the-titans-deserved-better-re-release>

Links:

[1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/mattmovieman>

[2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/blu-ray-review>

[3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/clash-of-the-titans>

[4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/desmond-davis>

[5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/harry-hamlin>

[6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>

[7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/king-kong>

[8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/laurence-olivier>

[9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/maggie-smith>
[10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/matt-fagerholm>
[11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/ray-harryhausen>
[12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/dvd-theater-tv-news>
[13] <mailto:matt@hollywoodchicago.com>
[14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#MATT>