The Beastmaster

The Beastmaster is a 1982 sword and sorcery film directed by Don Coscarelli and starring Marc Singer, Tanya Roberts, John Amos and Rip Torn. The film is about a child who is stolen from his mother's womb by a witch. The child grows into Dar, who has the ability to communicate telepathically with animals. Dar grows up in a village where he learns to do battle. But the village is destroyed by a race of beast-like warriors under the control of the sorcerer Maax. Dar vows revenge and travels with new friends to stop Maax from causing any more problems.

Commercially The Beastmaster was not considered a box office success during its original cinematic run; however later it received extensive television exposure and success on cable in the American market on channels TBS and HBO. The original film spawned two sequels as well as a syndicated television series that chronicled the further adventures of Dar.

Contents

Plot
Cast
Production
Music
Disc 1
Disc 2
Release
Reception
Sequels and TV series
See also
References
External links

Plot

In the kingdom of Aruk, the high priest Maax /ˈmeɪ.æks/ May-aks is given a prophecy by his witches that he would die facing the son of King Zed. Learning of Maax's scheme to murder his child as a sacrificial offering to the kingdom's god Ar, Zed exiled Maax and his followers from the city. However, Maax sent one of his witches to transfer the unborn child from the womb of Zed's queen and into a cow to be born. After his birth the witch brands the infant with Ar's mark, but is killed by a villager who takes the infant in his care and raises him as his own son. Named Dar while raised in the village of Emur,
the child learns how to fight while advised by his father to keep his ability to telepathically communicate with animals a secret. Years later, a fully grown Dar witnesses his people being slaughtered by the Juns, a horde of fanatic barbarians allied with Maax. Dar, the only survivor of the attack, journeys to Aruk to avenge his people. In time, Dar is joined by an eagle that he names Sharak, a pair of thieving ferrets he calls Kodo and Podo, and a black tiger whom he names Ruh.

Eventually, Dar meets a redheaded slave girl called Kiri before getting himself lost and ending up surrounded by an eerie half-bird, half-human race who dissolve their prey for nourishment. As the bird men worship eagles, they spare Dar when he summons Sharak and give him an amulet should he need their aid. Dar soon arrives to Aruk where Maax had assumed total control with the Juns support and subjects the people to witness their children being sacrificed. After having Sharak save the child of a townsman named Sacco, Dar learns that Kiri is to be sacrificed. On his way to save her, Dar is joined by Zed's younger son Tal and his bodyguard Seth, learning that Kiri is Zed's niece as the three work to save her. While Seth goes to gather their forces, Dar helps Kiri and Tal infiltrate the temple and save the now eyeless Zed and while escaping from the temple's beast-like Death Guards and Maax himself, leading his small coven of evil witches.

Consumed by revenge, Zed refuses to listen to Dar's warning against ordering an immediate attack on the city and rejects him as a freak. Forced to leave, Dar later learns that his friends are captured and races to Aruk to save them from being sacrificed. In the conflict that followed, Maax reveals Dar's relationship to Zed before slitting his throat and facing the Beastmaster. Despite being stabbed, revived by his remaining witch before she was killed, Maax was about to kill Dar when Kodo sacrifices himself to cause the high priest to fall into the sacrificial flames. But the victory is short-lived as the Jun horde are approaching Aruk, arriving by nightfall to face the trap Dar and the people set up for them. Tal gets wounded as Dar succeeds in burning most of the Juns alive while defeating their chieftain before the bird-men arrive to consume those remaining. The following day, though Seth learned that he is Zed's first born, Dar explains that Tal would make a better king as he leaves Aruk. Dar sets off into the wild with Kiri, Ruh, Sharak and Podo (who has given birth to two baby ferrets) on the path to new adventures.

### Cast

- **Marc Singer** as Dar
  - **Billy Jacoby** as young Dar
- **Tanya Roberts** as Kiri
- **Rip Torn** as Maax
- **John Amos** as Seth
- **Josh Milrad** as Tal
- **Rod Loomis** as King Zed
- **Vanna Bonta** as Zed's Queen
- **Ben Hammer** as Dar's father
- **Ralph Strait** as Sacco
- **Tony Epper** as Jun Leader
- **Paul Reynolds** as Tils

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The Beastmaster - Wikipedia

Distributed by MGM/UA Entertainment Co.

Release date August 19, 1982

Running time 118 minutes

Country United States

West Germany[1]

Language English

Budget $9 million

Box office $14.1 million[2]
Production

*Beastmaster* began with a screenplay in the early 1980s written by Paul Pepperman and Don Coscarelli.[3] The two writers based their film on Andre Norton's 1959 novel *The Beast Master*. The writers changed the story dramatically as the original novel had the hero named Hosteen Storm who was a Navajo fighter in a futuristic science fiction setting. Norton was unhappy with the liberties taken with the film's script and asked for her name to be removed from the credits.[3] When Coscarelli signed on as a director, Pepperman became the film's producer and brought in co-producer Sylvio Tabet to the project.[3] The producers went to raise funds for the film at the 1981 MIFED film market in Milan and at the 1982 Cannes Film Festival.[3] The budget of $9 million was raised, giving director Coscarelli his highest budget to work with up until that point in his career.[3]

Coscarelli was frustrated while making the film, during which he feuded with the film's executive producer predominantly over the film's editing and casting.[3] Coscarelli originally wanted Demi Moore for the role of Kiri, but the executive producer overrode his choice and had Tanya Roberts cast.[3] The role of Maax was originally written for Klaus Kinski, but he was not cast over a salary dispute.[3] The film was shot over the course of five-and-a-half months.[3] The film was shot in California's Simi Valley and in Los Padres National Forest's Lake Piru in Ventura County, and Valley of Fire State Park in Nevada.[3] Interior shots were done at MGM/UA lot.[3]

Music

The score was composed and conducted by Lee Holdridge; it was recorded in Rome with members of The Orchestra of the Academy of Santa Cecilia of Rome and the Radio Symphony Orchestra of Rome. The soundtrack album was originally issued by Varese Sarabande, and subsequently by C.A.M. In 2013 Quartet Records released a 1200-copy limited edition featuring the original album (tracks 1–13, disc 1) and most of the film's score (Holdridge wrote eighty minutes of music for the film; a few cues could not be found, but the album includes music that was not heard in the finished product).[4]

Disc 1

1. The Legend of Dar (Main Theme) (1:32)
2. The Horde (The Destruction of Emur) (2:43)
3. A Sword and an Eagle (The Epic Begins) (4:49)
5. The Pyramid (2:47)
7. The Battle on the Pyramid (6:42)
8. A Hero's Theme (The Legend of Dar) (2:56)
9. Heroic Friends (4:30)
10. Escape From the Pyramid (2:40)
11. Dar's Solitude (1:28)
12. The Great Battle (Dar's Triumph) (3:37)
13. The New Kingdom (3:22)
14. The Beastmaster (Seq. 1 – Main Titles) (1:48)
15. The Beastmaster (Seq. 2 – Stealing the Child) (3:12)
16. The Beastmaster (Seq. 3 – The Ritual) (1:36)
17. The Beastmaster (Seq. 4 – A New Father) (1:35)
18. The Beastmaster (Seq. 5 – Jun Raid) (4:21)
19. The Beastmaster (Seq. 6 – Sword and Eagle) (4:41)
20. The Beastmaster (Seq. 7 – Ferret Chase/Quicksand) (2:13)
21. The Beastmaster (Seq. 8 – Captive Panther/Fighting Juns) (2:53)
Disc 2

1. The Beastmaster (Seq. 11 – Journey to the City) (1:31)
2. The Beastmaster (Seq. 12 – Sacrifice Thwarted) (4:16)
3. The Beastmaster (Seq. 13 – Death Sentence) (2:16)
4. The Beastmaster (Seq. 14 – Eagle Vision) (2:22)
5. The Beastmaster (Seq. 15 – The Rescue of Kiri) (2:21)
6. The Beastmaster (Seq. 16 – Raft Escape) (4:12)
7. The Beastmaster (Seq. 17 – Into the Pyramid/Corridor Ambush) (1:00)
8. The Beastmaster (Seq. 18 – Stealing the Keys/The Cell) (4:41)
9. The Beastmaster (Seq. 19 – The Escape Begins/The Escape Continues) (2:49)
10. The Beastmaster (Seq. 20 – A Little Late) (1:27)
11. The Beastmaster (Seq. 21 – Outside the Pyramid) (1:34)
12. The Beastmaster (Seq. 22 – Through the Gate/Dar the Outcast) (2:44)
13. The Beastmaster (Seq. 23 – Pyramid Battle, Part I (Alternate) (2:49)
14. The Beastmaster (Seq. 24 – Pyramid Battle, Part II (Alternate) (2:18)
15. The Beastmaster (Seq. 25 – Pyramid Battle, Part III (Alternate) (3:57)
16. The Beastmaster (Seq. 26 – Preparations) (1:48)
17. The Beastmaster (Seq. 27 – The Horde Attacks/The Moat/Dar vs. Jun Leader) (4:48)
18. The Beastmaster (Seq. 28 – The Tide Turns) (1:30)
19. The Beastmaster (Seq. 29 – A New King) (3:24)
20. The Beastmaster (Seq. 30 – Finale) (2:05)
21. The Battle on the Pyramid (Film Version) (6:42)

Release

The Beastmaster was planned to open December 25, 1982 until it was announced in July that United Artists had acquired domestic distribution rights and rescheduled the film for a summer release.[1] It was rescheduled to August 1982 had a promotional sneak peek of the film at the Comic Book and Science Fiction Convention in Los Angeles.[1]

The Beastmaster premièred in theatres on August 19, 1982.[3] It was released in 16 cities in the United States on 165 screens and opened in eight more cities and 66 screens in its second week.[3] The film opened in fifth place on its opening week. After six weeks, it had a total box office of revenue of $3,561,475.[3]

It subsequently received significant local TV and cable airplay, notably HBO and TBS and TNT.[5] The film was shown so often on HBO, that comedian Dennis Miller joked that HBO stood for "Hey, Beastmaster's On".[3] In 1993, a programming director for TNT claimed that it was second-only to Gone with the Wind as the most popular movie to air on the network and attributed its success to its "mythological appeal—it's more serious than the Conan movies." while Another programming director, for Cinemax, stated that "You can come into any part of it and not feel you've missed much."

Reception

The Beastmaster grossed roughly $14 million on its initial theatrical release.[2] Josh Milrad was nominated for a Young Artist Award for "Best Young Supporting Actor in a Motion Picture" for his co-starring role as Tal in the film.[3]

According to Variety, the film opened to mixed reviews.[1]
Sequels and TV series

*The Beastmaster* received a sequel in 1991 *Beastmaster 2: Through the Portal of Time.*[3] The film was directed by the original film producer Sylvio Tabet.[3] The direct-to-video third film was released in 1996 titled *Beastmaster III: The Eye of Braxus.*[3] Both sequels feature Marc Singer in the role of Dar.[3] The films were followed by a syndicated television series in 1999.[3] The television series changes the backstory of Dar who is played by Daniel Goddard.[3]

See also

- The Sword and the Sorcerer – a contemporaneous movie from the same genre

References


External links

- *The Beastmaster* (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0083630/) on IMDb
- *The Beastmaster* (https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/beastmaster/) at Rotten Tomatoes
- *The Beastmaster* (https://www.allmovie.com/movie/v4471) at AllMovie


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