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Gargoyles Movie 1972 Wiki

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Introduction to the Cult Classic: Gargoyles (1972)

In the annals of made-for-television horror, few films have achieved the lasting, eerie fascination of **Gargoyles Movie 1972**. Directed by Bill L. Norton and originally airing on CBS on November 21, 1972, this chilling creature feature introduced audiences to a world where ancient stone guardians were not merely decorative but terrifyingly alive. The film quickly became a staple of late-night television and home video, earning a devoted following among horror enthusiasts and fantasy fans alike. This **Gargoyles Movie 1972 Wiki** style article delves deep into the film's production, plot, cast, and enduring legacy, offering a comprehensive look at a piece of television history that continues to inspire and unsettle viewers decades later.

The story of *Gargoyles* is more than just a monster movie; it is a reflection of early 1970s anxieties about history, science, and the unknown. With its memorable creature design by Stan Winston—his first major credit—and a surprisingly thoughtful script, the film stands as a testament to the power of practical effects and atmospheric storytelling. Whether you are a longtime fan or discovering this obscure gem for the first time, this **Gargoyles Movie 1972 Wiki** will guide you through every aspect of the film, from its origins to its place in pop culture.

Plot Overview: The Awakening of Ancient Evil

The narrative of *Gargoyles* begins with Dr. Mercer Boley (Cornel Wilde), an anthropologist who arrives at a remote desert museum with his daughter, Diana (Jennifer Salt). The museum, run by a eccentric curator named Dr. Arthur "Doc" Moseley (Woodrow Parfrey), is a repository of oddities and occult artifacts. Boley hopes to study a collection of gargoyle statues that have been unearthed from a nearby canyon. However, these are no ordinary stone carvings. They are the preserved remains of a race of winged, demonic creatures that once terrorized the ancient world.

Through a combination of solar eclipse and the meddling of a misguided local, the gargoyles are resurrected. Led by a fearsome creature simply known as "The Gargoyle" (played under heavy makeup by Bernie Casey), the monsters embark on a rampage across the desert, kidnapping the curator's daughter and seeking to revive their species by mating with human women. Boley and Diana must race against time to stop the creatures before they can establish a new brood of half-human, half-gargoyle hybrids.

The film blends elements of **creature feature** horror with a surprisingly intelligent examination of folklore and the power of belief. The gargoyles are not mindless beasts; they possess a culture, a language, and a clear goal of survival. This depth elevates *Gargoyles* above many other television movies of its era, making it a subject of academic interest as well as simple entertainment.

Key Themes and Symbolism

Beyond its surface-level horror, **Gargoyles Movie 1972** explores themes of extinction, adaptation, and the

clash between science and superstition. Dr. Boley's scientific rationalism is continually challenged by the reality of the gargoyles, forcing him to accept that some ancient legends are literally true. The film also touches on the idea that cultural memory is physically preserved in stone, but they are also preserved in the stories and nightmares of humanity. This layered approach to storytelling is one reason why the film has remained a topic of discussion in horror circles for over five decades.

Cast and Characters

The cast of *Gargoyles*features a mix of established actors and rising stars, all of whom bring a seriousness to the material that helps sell the fantastic premise.

- Cornel Wilde as Dr. Mercer Boley: A seasoned actor and director, Wilde brings gravitas to the role of the skeptical anthropologist. His performance anchors the film, providing a relatable human perspective amidst the supernatural chaos.
- Jennifer Salt as Diana Boley: Salt, later known for her work on the TV series Soap, plays the doctor's resourceful daughter. She is not merely a damsel in distress but an active participant in the fight against the gargoyles.
- Bernie Casey as the Gargoyle Leader: Casey, a former NFL player turned actor, delivers a surprisingly nuanced performance through layers of latex and makeup. The gargoyle leader is intelligent, menacing, and even tragic in his quest for survival.
- Woodrow Parfrey as Dr. Arthur Moseley: The eccentric curator provides both comic relief and exposition, setting the stage for the horror to come.
- Scott Glenn as a young motorcyclist: In one of his earliest roles, Glenn appears as a biker who encounters the gargoyles. His brief but memorable scene adds to the film's atmosphere of roadside dread.

The performances, while sometimes stilted by the standards of modern television, are earnest and effective. The cast treats the material with respect, which helps the audience suspend disbelief and invest in the story.

Production: Behind the Scenes of a TV Horror Landmark

Director and Crew

Bill L. Norton, who had previously directed the acclaimed documentary *Faces of the Dead*, brought a documentary-like realism to *Gargoyles*. He chose to shoot primarily on location in the California desert, giving the film a stark, sunbaked look that contrasts sharply with the dark, nocturnal creatures. The screenplay was written by Stephen and Elinor Karpf, who based their story on a treatment that combined elements of Native American folklore with European gargoyle mythology.

Makeup and Creature Effects: The Birth of Stan Winston

The most famous aspect of **Gargoyles Movie 1972**is undoubtedly the creature design, created by a young Stan Winston. This was Winston's first major film credit, and the work he did would later earn him an Emmy Award for Outstanding Achievement in Makeup. The gargoyles were realized through a combination of foam latex prosthetics, articulated masks, and animatronic wings. Bernie Casey wore a full-body suit with a mask that allowed him to convey expressions through subtle movements.

The wing mechanism was particularly innovative for television at the time. The gargoyles could extend and retract their wings, giving them a bat-like appearance that moved with surprising fluidity. Winston's designs drew inspiration from medieval church gargoyles but also incorporated reptilian and avian features, creating a truly original creature that remains iconic to this day.

Filming Locations and Cinematography

The film was shot primarily in the Mojave Desert, with additional scenes filmed at the Griffith Observatory and a small museum in Los Angeles. Cinematographer Michel Hugo used available light to create a harsh, naturalistic look that made the fantastic elements feel grounded. The nighttime scenes are lit by firelight and headlights,

adding to the sense of vulnerability. The desert setting is not just a backdrop but an active element of the horror, isolating the characters and amplifying the alien nature of the gargoyles.

Reception and Initial Broadcast

Upon its initial airing on CBS on November 21, 1972, *Gargoyles*was a ratings success, drawing a substantial audience for its time slot. Critical reception was mixed but generally favorable. Reviewers praised the creature effects and the film's willingness to treat its subject matter seriously. Some critics found the pacing slow by modern standards, but the film's atmosphere and tension were widely commended.

The New York Times called it "a genuinely frightening television movie that rises above its modest budget through sheer imagination." *Variety* noted that "the makeup effects by Stan Winston are sensational and will likely terrify children and adults alike." The film won an Emmy for Outstanding Makeup, cementing Stan Winston's reputation and opening doors for his future work on *The Terminator*, *Aliens*, and *Jurassic Park*.

Legacy and Cultural Impact

The influence of **Gargoyles Movie 1972**extends far beyond its original broadcast. For decades, it was a staple of late-night television, frequently airing on local stations and later on cable channels like TNT and Sci-Fi Channel. The film's iconic creature design has been referenced and homaged in countless other works. The 1990s Disney animated series "Gargoyles" drew its name and basic concept from this film, though it developed its own mythology.

The film also played a role in the popularization of the **gargoyle**as a horror icon. Prior to 1972, gargoyles were primarily seen as architectural features or benign guardians. This movie reframed them as terrifying, predatory monsters, a trope that would be exploited in numerous subsequent films, video games, and novels.

Home Video and Restoration

For many years, *Gargoyles*was only available in poor-quality VHS and DVD transfers, often pan-and-scan versions that cropped the original 1.33:1 aspect ratio. However, in recent years, the film has seen a resurgence. A high-definition remaster was released on Blu-ray by the Warner Archive Collection in 2021, featuring a pristine 1080p transfer from the original film elements. This release has allowed a new generation of horror fans to appreciate the film's visual quality and practical effects in all their glory.

Trivia and Fun Facts

Fans of the film often enjoy these lesser-known details:

- Stan Winston was only 26 years old when he worked on Gargoyles. He built the creatures in his garage, assisted by a small team of friends.
- The film's budget was approximately $750,000, considered moderate for a television movie at the time.
- Bernie Casey, who played the lead gargoyle, was a former professional football player for the San Francisco 49ers. He later became a noted painter and poet.
- The roar of the gargoyles was created by mixing recordings of lions, bears, and elephants with electronically altered human voices.
- The film features an early score by composer Robert Prince, who later worked on The Incredible Hulk TV series. The music uses atonal strings and percussive rhythms to build tension.
- A sequel was planned but never materialized. However, the film's concept has been revisited in various forms, including a 2004 television pilot that did not get picked up.

Where to Watch Gargoyles (1972) Today

Gargoyles Movie 1972 is available on Blu-ray from the Warner Archive Collection. It can also be rented or purchased digitally from platforms such as Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV, and Vudu. The film occasionally airs on Turner Classic Movies during their horror programming marathons, particularly around Halloween. Streaming availability may vary by region, but the recent restoration has made it more accessible than ever.

Conclusion: A Timeless Television Horror

More than fifty years after its original broadcast, *Gargoyles* remains a standout example of what television horror could achieve with limited resources but unlimited imagination. It introduced the world to the extraordinary talents of Stan Winston, gave audiences a genuinely frightening monster, and told a story that balanced action, suspense, and genuine thematic depth. This **Gargoyles Movie 1972 Wiki** article has aimed to capture the film's magic and significance, from its rocky desert setting to its lasting influence on pop culture. Whether you are a horror completist or simply curious about the origins of a beloved trope, *Gargoyles*is a journey worth taking—one that proves that even stone can hold a terrifying pulse.

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