

WES CRAVEN'S

**THE HILLS
HAVE EYES**

CAST

Susan Lanier Brenda Carter
Robert Houston Bobby Carter
Martin Speer Doug Wood
Dee Wallace Lynne Wood
Russ Grieve Big Bob Carter
Virginia Vincent Ethel Carter
John Steadman Fred
James Whitworth Jupiter
Lance Gordon Mars
Michael Berryman Pluto
Janus Blythe Ruby

CREW

Written and Directed by **Wes Craven**
Produced by **Peter Locke**
Production Manager **Walter Cichy**
Director of Photography **Eric Saarinen**
Art Director **Robert Burns**
Edited by **Wes Craven**
Music by **Don Peake**
Costume Designer **Joanne Jaffe**





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FAMILY ACTIVITIES: WES CRAVEN'S *THE HILLS HAVE EYES*

by Brad Stevens

Warning: the following piece contains spoilers

Prior to his death in 2015, Wes Craven's name was synonymous with the modern American horror film, *The Last House on the Left* (1972) and *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977) being key titles in the genre's 1970s golden age. Craven's later output varied wildly in quality, with a number of half-hearted efforts – including the ill-advised though not completely uninteresting *The Hills Have Eyes Part II* (1984) – bracketing such notable achievements as *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) and *The People Under the Stairs* (1991). Craven's increasingly satirical perspective resulted in one remarkable film, *New Nightmare* (1994), in which he provided a surprisingly harsh assessment of the *Elm Street* franchise. But this attitude tied in all too neatly with that postmodern viewpoint which defined horror in its post-70s phase, and Craven achieved his greatest commercial success with the snidely superior *Scream* series (1996-2011), four films which remain watchable solely because of the director's technical skills.

To turn from these late works back to *The Hills Have Eyes* is to be reminded that the conventions of the horror genre were once seen not as inert rules inviting parody, but rather as tools that might enable penetrating critiques of an America which, in the aftermath of Vietnam and Watergate, was undergoing a crisis of confidence. The film's central characters are the Carter family, consisting of an elderly married couple, Big Bob (Russ Grieve) and Ethel Carter (Virginia Vincent), their three grown children, Brenda Carter (Susan Lanier), Bobby Carter (Robert Houston) and Lynne Wood (Dee Wallace, later Dee Wallace Stone), and Lynne's husband, Doug Wood (Martin Speer). Together with Lynne and Doug's baby, Katherine, as well as two dogs, Beauty and Beast, the entire family are travelling to California in a trailer which breaks down in the middle of the desert. After making various failed attempts to summon help, the Carters are attacked by another, superficially quite different family in which the patriarchal role is played by Jupiter, or 'Papa Jupe' (James Whitworth), who had been abandoned as a child by his own father, local gas station owner Fred (John Steadman). Jupiter had subsequently taken a 'wife' ("a whore that nobody would miss," according to Grandpa Fred) and raised a family – three sons, Mercury (played by the film's producer, Peter Locke, under the pseudonym 'Arthur King'), Pluto (Craven regular Michael Berryman) and Mars (Lance Gordon), and a daughter, Ruby (Janus Blythe) – which survives by robbing travellers, often resorting to acts of cannibalism.

The fascination of *The Hills Have Eyes* is to a large extent the result of its straddling three genres whose combination makes for a complex ideological mesh:

I. The Family Horror Film

Taking their cue from George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), American horror films of the 1970s focused relentlessly on the family. Several explicitly reactionary titles of this period – William



Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973) and Richard Donner's *The Omen* (1976) – emphasised the figure of the demonic child whose assaults on his or her blameless parents indicated that youthful rebellions which were bringing fundamental values into question could be traced to external forces of metaphysical evil, and thus decisively rejected.¹ More radical family horror films, however, often revolved around cannibalism; if the family is the privileged institution of capitalism, and if capitalism involves a form of consumption undisturbed by moral considerations, the logical product of advanced capitalism will surely be the cannibalistic, and even self-devouring family. The girl who eats her father in Romero's debut anticipates the cannibal families of Gary Sherman's *Death Line* (1972) and Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974), as well as the family in *The Hills Have Eyes* whose members plan to eat a baby belonging to their more conventional counterparts ("Maybe I make a joke like last time and I eat the toes. You think everybody laugh?" enquires Mercury).

II. The Western

There is a significant degree of overlap between the Western and the horror film, several distinguished examples of the latter – notably Hooper's *Poltergeist* (1982) and Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980) – tracing supernatural occurrences back to the genocide of America's native population, the ideological ground upon which the country (portrayed as a haunted house) was constructed. But the connections run far deeper than individual films might suggest. In both genres, the hero, whether Ethan Edwards or Van Helsing, is frequently opposed to an enemy, either Indian or monster, who threatens everything he holds dear, but with whom he has far more in common than he does with those settled communities in whose name he acts. The dark secret of Westerns and horror films is that the antagonist is in many ways more fascinatingly attractive than the protagonist, representing energies which can neither be decisively rejected nor wholeheartedly embraced – at least, that is, until these genres enter their apocalyptic phases (Ralph Nelson's *Soldier Blue* [1970], Arthur Penn's *Little Big Man* [1970], Clive Barker's *Nightbreed* [1990]), and the villain changes places with the hero. As its title implies, *The Hills Have Eyes* is a horror film that could easily be mistaken for a Western²; the rocky landscape through which Bobby pursues one of the dogs and where Doug finally confronts Mars might have come from Anthony Mann's *The Naked Spur* (1953) or Budd Boetticher's *The Tall T* (1957). The Carters' sophisticated trailer, stranded in the middle of a hostile terrain and subjected to a series of attacks by a primitive enemy, is used in precisely the same way as the mobile home in Jack Smight's *Race with the Devil* (1975), another attempt to combine horror and Western motifs. In both films, the vehicle stands for the fort or homestead, the forces that lay siege to it being associated with the Indians (*Hills'* Ruby clearly functions as a Pocahontas figure).

1- Although it inaugurates the possessed child cycle, Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) does not belong to this reactionary wing, its focus being on the ways in which the pregnant heroine's presumed helplessness brings to the surface attitudes and assumptions structuring woman's everyday experience of patriarchy. Similarly, Larry Cohen's *It's Alive* trilogy (1974-87) is among the genre's most progressive works, its narratives being driven not by attempts to protect society from the 'monster' babies, but rather by efforts to protect the babies from society.

2- Copyright information in the opening credits suggests the film was originally called *Blood Relations*, a title which emphasises another aspect of its complex heritage. It is worth noting that Craven's contribution to Roy Frumkes' uncompleted horror anthology *Tales That Will Tear Your Heart Out* (1976), shot shortly before *The Hills Have Eyes*, was a supernatural Western.

III. The Domesticated Male Strikes Back

If the Western traditionally provided an arena in which masculinity could be tested and reaffirmed, the conflicts of the 1970s resulted in the appearance of a group of films in which domesticated males proved unexpectedly adept at violence. Appropriately enough, the earliest example, Sam Peckinpah's *Straw Dogs* (1971), is for all intents and purposes a modern-day Western; its star, Dustin Hoffman, later appeared in John Schlesinger's *Marathon Man* (1976), with which it has close thematic links. John Boorman's *Deliverance* (1972), itself once a Peckinpah project, and Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) make for a particularly fascinating pairing, in that although both films initially position Hemingwayesque men of action – Lewis (Burt Reynolds) in Boorman's film, Quint (Robert Shaw) in Spielberg's – as best-suited to resolve the crisis, neither of these macho characters plays any meaningful role in subsequent events, the decisive acts being carried out by mild-mannered representatives of middle-America, Ed (Jon Voight) and Brody (Roy Scheider). Sherman's *Death Line*, which anticipates *The Hills Have Eyes* in several respects, again figures here, as does Michael Winner's *Death Wish* (1974), despite being skewed by the casting of Charles Bronson (its original director Sidney Lumet's choice of Jack Lemmon for the lead would undoubtedly have made the connection clearer). In Winner's film, as in Spielberg's, aggression is unambiguously approved of, yet even the more thoughtful works by Sherman, Boorman and Peckinpah remain strikingly ambivalent in their attitude towards violence, which is seen as destructive and dehumanising, yet regrettably necessary.

The Last House on the Left and *The Hills Have Eyes* are in some ways central to this subgenre, in others peripheral to it, the active roles taken by the female characters (and, in *Hills*, even the dogs) undermining the notion of masculinity redeemed. The 'bad' families barely make sense in naturalistic terms, functioning rather as a Freudian 'return of the repressed' in relation to the 'good' families, whose members become progressively less sympathetic as they dispatch their doppelgangers. *Hills* in particular stresses the resemblance between its two family units; the Carters' petty domestic squabbles anticipate the arguments of Papa Jupe's brood, while the dim-witted Mercury, whose role is essentially that of watchdog (Pluto even tells him to be a 'good dog') is killed by one of the Carters' dogs. The idea of normality being just a hair away from abnormality is forcefully conveyed by having Bobby's interruption of Doug and Lynne's lovemaking in the station wagon occur almost simultaneously with Mars' interruption of Pluto ("You wait 'til you get to be a man") as he is about to rape Brenda in the trailer; Pluto expresses his sexual frustration by smashing up the kitchen, a response which, despite being almost animalistic, is really nothing more than an acted-out variation on Doug's verbal complaints ("I mean with the amount of privacy we get on this trip..."). When the domesticated Doug eventually beats the savage Mars to death, Craven's mise-en-scène (he ends the film with a still-frame of Doug, which abruptly turns red) suggests there is no longer anything to choose between them.³ According to Craven, "I used the theme in a more conscious way with *The Hills Have Eyes*. I constructed these two families as mirrors of each other. I found it a very interesting way to look at ourselves, as a nation and as people, to think of ourselves as having the capacity not only for great good but for great evil. It creates

3- An alternate version of the final reel (included among the extras on Arrow's disc) reverses the order of the last two scenes, and adds a coda showing Ruby joining hands with Brenda as the surviving dog looks on approvingly. Craven's rejection of this audience-friendly conclusion in favour of a more disturbing climax suggests how important it was to him that viewers not find the violence cathartic.



a more rounded point of view than the type of thinking that dictates, 'Well, I'm an American, so I can do no wrong,' or 'I'm a law-abiding citizen, therefore I could never kill anybody or do anything violent.' One way or another, we're all capable of anything."⁴

Though never made explicit, references to the presence of a nuclear testing site imply that Jupiter's physical abnormalities may be the result of exposure to radiation at the hands of the U.S. government. Craven certainly resists the temptation to offer any supernatural explanation for him, Grandpa Fred, who refers to his son as a 'monster' – "a devil kid who grew up to be a devil man" – being unambiguously discredited. The 'bad' family is the product of deprivation, just as the 'good' one is the product of privilege. The luxuriousness of the Carters' trailer, which reproduces capitalism's taken-for-granted comforts in portable form, suggests the real nature of the conflict, and if Jupiter's clan are motivated by the same resentments as their Native American predecessors, they also bring to mind that war in Vietnam which had recently ended in humiliating defeat for the technologically superior combatant; in this context, the way Bobby and Brenda successfully use their trailer – civilisation itself – as a weapon by booby-trapping it to blow up when Jupiter opens the door is extremely resonant.⁵

Viewing *The Hills Have Eyes* today, one is struck by the tremendous confidence with which it erases the lines between good and evil, hero and villain, civilisation and savagery, Western and horror film, emotional involvement and critical detachment. This confidence is surely rooted in Craven's certainty that a market existed for texts which dramatised ideological tensions. Although remnants of this populist tradition can still be found in contemporary filmmaking, these are inevitably isolated gestures haunted by the suspicion that they are addressed to a niche clientele (the mainstream being dominated by crude fantasies which reinforce corporate values). *The Hills Have Eyes*, released the same year as *Star Wars* (which pointed commercial cinema in a very different direction), is among the last American exploitation films to engage politically with popular audiences in a spirit not of daring or contrariety, but as if this were the most natural thing imaginable.

Brad Stevens is the author of Monte Hellman: His Life and Films (McFarland, 2003) and Abel Ferrara: The Moral Vision (FAB Press, 2004). His 'Bradlands' column appears regularly on Sight & Sound's website.

4- Quoted in David A. Szulkin's *Wes Craven's Last House on the Left: The Making of a Cult Classic* (FAB Press, 1997, revised 2000), p. 20.

5- According to Robin Wood, who interviewed the director in 1979, Craven saw *The Hills Have Eyes* as a "deliberate, if oblique, (commentary) on Vietnam and its impact on the structures of American society" (*Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*, Columbia University Press, 1986, p. 133).







THE HILLS STILL HAVE EYES

by Ewan Cant

Strange as it now seems, my first encounter with the universe of *The Hills Have Eyes* was not courtesy of Wes Craven's original, but through its follow-up: 1985's *The Hills Have Eyes Part II*. Anyone acquainted with that much-maligned sequel will know that it replays a hefty amount of footage from its predecessor, presented under the guise of "flashbacks". As widely-criticised as *The Hills Have Eyes Part II*'s recycling of footage may be, I can't help but hold a soft spot for the film that indirectly introduced me to one of the greatest horror movies of all time – Craven's ferocious 1977 original.

Of course, the story of Jupiter's crazed cannibal clan didn't end with the 1985 sequel – the hills would continue to have eyes for many years to come, courtesy of a number of films, some more effective than others. So, as Craven's original classic takes a bow on Blu-ray in a glorious new 4K transfer, what better occasion to take a look back at the sequels, remakes, and sequels-of-remakes which make up the *Hills Have Eyes* universe?

Our journey starts with the aforementioned *The Hills Have Eyes Part II*. The follow-up to *The Hills Have Eyes* took its time to gestate, not going into production until late 1983 – some six years after the original had terrorised audiences. Despite the urgings of Peter Locke (producer of the original *Hills*) to do a sequel, Craven had evidently been resistant to the idea, only acquiescing when he found himself in need of the work after the box-office failure of his 1982 DC Comics' adaptation *Swamp Thing*. (It wouldn't be until November of 1984 that Craven's breakthrough hit *A Nightmare on Elm Street* would be unleashed on audiences.)

Taking its cue from the original *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, *The Hills Have Eyes Part II* opens with a text scroll and a narrator, doing his best John Larroquette impression, assuring us that "*the following film is based on fact*" (isn't it always?). The sombre voice briefly recaps the events of the original *Hills* – the Carter family's ordeal out in the desert at the hands of a bloodthirsty band of cannibals – before ending on the ominous affirmation that "*far out in the unmapped desert ... the hills still have eyes*".

And indeed, we're about to discover just that as we're introduced to Bobby, one of the few survivors of the original – now a grown man who, perhaps unsurprisingly, has gone on to develop a serious aversion to the desert. Bobby is in charge of a motocross team whose next big race calls for them to travel cross-country via the desert. Reduced to a nervous wreck ahead of the trip, Bobby bows out, leaving the excursion to be led by his business partner – none other than Ruby (the cannibal girl from the original *Hills*), now going by the name of Rachel and having made a remarkable transition from feral cannibal girl to snappily-dressed businesswoman.

And so the trip gets underway, precipitating much fun, frolics and flashbacks as our hot 'n' horny group of teens bikers (this is 1983, after all) set out across the desert. Of course, it's not long before their



bus breaks down in the middle of the desert wilderness, leaving them at the mercy of Pluto – the only surviving member of the original cannibal clan from *The Hills Have Eyes*. (Pluto is, incidentally, looking pretty good for someone who was having his throat torn out by a dog last time we saw him.)

Of course, this being a sequel – and the fact that the majority of the other cannibals were quite definitively dead by the end of the first film – the filmmakers needed to bring some fresh villainy to the table, which we get in the hulking form of The Reaper. An all-round massive dude with an ill temper and what looks to be a giant tumour protruding from his forehead, The Reaper cuts a menacing figure indeed. As night falls, the motocross team find themselves hunted down and dispatched one-by-one, until the surviving few are left to tackle the crazed mutants in a fiery finale.

Now, if all this is starting to sound like cookie-cutter slasher stuff then that's because, ultimately, it is. Coming at a time when teen body-count movies were all the rage, it's perhaps somewhat unsurprising that the makers of *The Hills Have Eyes Part II* would seek to jump on the slice-and-dice bandwagon and produce something that is, to all intents and purposes, a *Friday the 13th* sequel set in the desert. Adding heavily to the Camp Crystal Lake atmosphere is the score from *Friday the 13th* alumni Harry Manfredini, which will sound very familiar indeed to Jason Vorhees fans.

Despite having Craven back in the director's chair, *The Hills Have Eyes Part II* is short on any sense of the master horror filmmaker at work – there's little evidence of the same raw talent which had previously birthed such seminal shockers as *The Last House on the Left* and the original *Hills*. By all accounts, Craven himself was unhappy with the finished product, claiming that what was released into cinemas was, in his estimations, an uncompleted movie.

With that said, there's still plenty on offer here to make *The Hills Have Eyes Part II* at least of passing interest for horror fans. It's a generic slasher movie for sure, but one that is competently handled, and it's always nice to see a stalk-and-slash narrative played out against an unfamiliar backdrop – in this instance the desert. It certainly helps too that some of the key *Hills* cast members return, providing some much needed continuity with the original film. There's even a certain pleasure to be taken in the knowing references to its predecessor which are peppered throughout the script.

The Hills Have Eyes Part II is certainly not Craven's finest, but it undoubtedly has its merits for both slasher movie buffs and fans of the original alike. And whilst it hardly set the box-office alight, the sequel nevertheless led to a period of renewed activity for Craven, culminating in a succession of fine genre offerings in the form of *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1988), *Shocker* and *The People Under the Stairs* (both 1989) – and for that fact alone, horror fans have reason to be grateful for *The Hills Have Eyes Part II*.

Our next stop on our tour of the *Hills* saga is something of an anomaly in the franchise and, quite frankly, not really a *Hills* film at all. Despite being marketed in some territories as *The Hills Have Eyes III: Mind Ripper*, 1995's *Mind Ripper* has precious little to do with the original *The Hills Have Eyes* or its sequel. Executive produced by Wes Craven and co-written by his son Jonathan Craven, the movie (originally titled *The Outpost*) reportedly began life as a second sequel to *The Hills Have Eyes*, before its creators decided that it would work better as a standalone film.

Weaving a *Frankenstein*-esque narrative, *Mind Ripper* tells the tale of a team of scientists striving to create a super-being at a top-secret research facility somewhere out in the desert. Of course, no sooner has their creation been birthed than all hell breaks loose – the former suicide victim, brought back to life and newly endowed with superhuman powers, awakes from his prostrated state and promptly sets about chomping on the brains of all in his vicinity. It's up to Lance Henriksen, his maybe-mistress and a kid from *Friends* (you know, the one that had the triplets?) to save the day.

With its copious scenes of cerebral trauma, *Mind Ripper* does what it says on the tin and it's an entertaining enough ride, despite its rather heavy borrowings from the *Alien* franchise; alongside the presence of Henriksen (who plays the android Bishop in *Aliens* [1986]), we have our heroes attempting to hunt their assailant down with a motion-tracking device, whilst the creature itself bores into its prey's craniums with an *Alien*-esque phallic oral protrusion. (And if we're really keeping score, there's also a moment where one poor chap gets pulled up through the air vent to his death, recalling a similar moment in *Alien³* [1992].)

Nevertheless, *Mind Ripper* has the goods where it counts, delivering plenty of gruesome practical make-up effects and tense cat-and-mouse chase sequences. Point of interest for *Hills* fans: the human-turned-monster goes by the moniker of "THOR" (an abbreviation of TransHuman Organism), which harkens back to the Roman god-naming convention of the cannibals from the original *Hills* – presumably a vestige of *Mind Ripper*'s origins as a second *Hills* sequel.

With the last bona fide *Hills* film having been released in 1985, it wouldn't be until 2006 that Craven would invite us to take another ill-advised detour across the desert. This time around, it wouldn't be a sequel but a remake (or "re-imagining", if you prefer) of his original movie. Produced by Craven and Peter Locke, *The Hills Have Eyes* (2006) was helmed by Frenchman Alexandre Aja, who had already demonstrated that he was a dab-hand at gut-wrenching horror with his 2003 rural slasher *Haute Tension* (*High Tension*, or *Switchblade Romance* in the UK).

For the most part, Aja's 2006 updating of *Hills* is a faithful rendition of the original movie, charting the ill-fated journey of the Carter family as they cross the desert in their campervan, only to fall foul of cannibals lurking in the hills. As might be expected from a post-millennial remake, one of the main features to receive an upgrade here is the gore quotient – a factor which can be felt right from the pre-credits sequence, in which a group of scientists carrying out research in the desert are brutally and bloodily dispatched by a pickaxe-wielding cannibal.

The nastiness factor is further upped when we come to the campervan sequence – surely the most intense portion of Craven's original – where, in quick succession, papa Carter is nailed to a tree and set alight, the mother and one of the daughters shot at point-blank range, the other daughter raped and the baby taken for the cannibal's cooking pot. Here, the remake opts to make the rape of Brenda much more explicit, whereas, in Craven's film, it's only implied. It certainly adds a nastier edge to proceedings but, conversely, it's debatable whether it actually enhances the impact of the scene. Horror is as much about what you don't see as what you do – a concept that the best of Craven's films demonstrate only too well.





The “more is less” criticism could similarly be levelled at the scenes depicting the crucifixion and burning of the father. In Aja’s version, through the magic of CGI, we’re able to pan across the desert (via a sped-up tracking shot) to close in on the father, nailed to the tree and writhing in agony amidst the searing flames. It’s an impressive sequence on a technical level, but somehow it packs less of a punch than the decidedly more lo-fi rendering of the scene in Craven’s original – where the father’s burning figure is glimpsed in a series of quick cuts, leaving his agonised wails to convey the horror of the scene.

But ultimately these are all niggles. *The Hills Have Eyes* (2006) is a solid slice of popcorn horror, taking us from one bloody encounter to the next at breakneck speed. The script, co-written by Aja and his writing partner Grégory Levasseur, adds a few ingenious twists to Craven’s original screenplay – most notably, the addition of the nuclear testing village, which serves as the atmospheric dwelling of the cannibal clan. Coming early on in the post-millennial push to remake absolutely any horror movie worth its salt (or otherwise), Aja’s *The Hills Have Eyes* remains one of the more entertaining and effective products of this trend.

As the original *The Hills Have Eyes* was followed by *The Hills Have Eyes Part II*, so the *Hills* remake would inevitably be followed a year later by *The Hills Have Eyes II* (2007). *The Hills Have Eyes II*, confusingly, isn’t a remake of its 1985 namesake, but a new *Hills* adventure altogether. In place of the motocross team of *The Hills Have Eyes Part II*, we have a group of young National Guard trainees being sent out into the desert on a mission to bring supplies to a group of scientists operating in an area known as Sector 16. As (bad) luck would have it, it’s the very same area where the Carter family wound up in the previous film. Bet you can’t see where this is going...

Sure enough, upon arrival at the scientists’ base camp, the would-be troops find the place completely deserted. It’s not long, however, before the eerie silence is broken by a mysterious radio distress call, precipitating a search and rescue mission as the group ascend the craggy surrounding hills to recover someone evidently in need of aid. Little do they suspect that they themselves will shortly become the ones in distress, as they find themselves being picked off by a band of maniacal mutants.

After I first saw *The Hills Have Eyes II* during its theatrical run, I quickly returned home to pen a scathing review which subsequently sat on my computer desktop, never to see the light of day. Revisiting the film some years on, I have to admit that I find it something of a guilty pleasure. The dialogue features some of the worst bro-on-bro “trash talk” that you’ve ever heard. Likewise, the leaps of logic are numerous – in one particularly memorable sequence, a man, covered in faeces, comes bursting out of the bottom of a latrine, having evidently been rammed down there by the cannibals. How on earth has he been stuck down there, perfectly submerged beneath the stinking slop for what must have been hours, without suffocating?

The Hills Have Eyes II is silly, yes – but I’ll concede that it’s silly fun. What we get in place of logic is a whole heap of new bad guys (all with their own unique, shall we say, *aesthetic* challenges), and some really rather memorable kill sequences. In one scene, a man is dragged through a crack in the rocks, causing his leg to snap violently backwards in nauseating fashion, whilst another wannabe soldier, hanging onto a cliff edge for dear life, has his arm lopped off by a machete, only for his assailant to wave him goodbye with his own severed hand as he falls to his death. A good time is had by all. (Additional

points for the end credits track “The Hills Have Eyes” from LoudLion – a gloriously cheesy hair-metal throwback to the days when horror films weren’t afraid to self-reference in their theme songs.)

Of course, the closing shot of *The Hills Have Eyes II* suggests that the story is far from over – our survivors, having slain the “end of level boss”-type character of Papa Hades, stumble out of the caves within the hills into the daylight, only for the camera to zoom out to reveal that an unseen figure is watching from afar. Nearly a decade on from that film’s theatrical release, however, and we’re still waiting for that promise of unfinished cannibal business to be made good. With Wes Craven having sadly passed away in 2015, it remains unclear whether the momentum will be there to keep the franchise going. But there are whisperings afoot...

The theatrical release of *The Hills Have Eyes II* was accompanied by the publication of *The Hills Have Eyes: The Beginning*, a graphic novel prequel to *The Hills Have Eyes* 2006 and its sequel. Delving into the history of how the mutant cannibals came to their current state, *The Hills Have Eyes: The Beginning* tells the story of the several generations of families who chose to remain in their small New Mexico town, despite the US Government’s decision to start using the area for atomic testing.

How is this relevant to the future of the *Hills* movie franchise, you might wonder? Well, last year, rumours began surfacing online that shock-rocker and filmmaker Rob Zombie (*The Devil’s Rejects* [2005], the 2007 *Halloween* remake) was writing the screenplay for an animated screen adaptation of *The Hills Have Eyes: The Beginning*. As of the time of writing, there currently exists an IMDb entry for the film, which lists the project as being “in development”. Nothing further is known at this stage, and with no official announcement, the rumours should perhaps be taken with a hefty pinch of salt.

Nevertheless, it seems almost inevitable that one day filmmakers will return to mine the tale of those crazed desert-dwelling cannibals. Drawing as it does its inspiration from the purported real-life case of Scottish cannibal Sawney Bean, the central narrative of *The Hills Have Eyes* and its cinematic successors is as old as... well... as the hills – and those sorts of stories never truly die. As any horror fan will tell you: somewhere, far out in the unmapped desert, beyond the town and roads, the hills *still* have eyes.

Ewan Cant is senior producer for Arrow Video. As a kid, he once tried to persuade his local Blockbuster Video to sell him their only copy of the original The Hills Have Eyes when the retail VHS was out of print. They respectfully declined.







ABOUT THE RESTORATION

The Hills Have Eyes is presented in the 1.78:1 aspect ratio with its original mono soundtrack as well as stereo and 7.1 mixes. *The Hills Have Eyes* was shot on 16mm and the grainy appearance is true to the source materials.

The film was scanned in 4K on a Northlight Film Scanner, selecting the reels in the best condition from 2 separate 35mm CRI elements struck from the 16mm AB negative reels, which have been lost. The optical soundtrack was transferred from original 35mm print elements.

All restoration work was completed at Gamma Ray Digital, Inc., Boston, Massachusetts, USA. Scanning and grading was overseen by Perry Paolantonio and the restoration work was supervised by Benn Robbins.

The 4K HDR10 grading was completed by Jan Frederick Kuhn and Benjamin Albrecht at LSP Medien in Uelzen.

The 4K restored HDR master was supplied by Turbine Medien GmbH.

Turbine Medien GmbH:
Christian Bartsch



PRODUCTION CREDITS

Original 2016 Release

Disc and Booklet Produced by **Ewan Cant**

Production Assistant **Liane Cunje**

Artwork by **Paul Shipper**

2021 4K Ultra HD Release

Disc and Booklet Produced by **Michael Mackenzie**

Executive Producers **Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni**

Technical Producer **James White**

Disc Production Manager **Nora Mehenni**

QC **Michael Mackenzie**

Production Assistant **Samuel Thiery**

UHD Mastering **Fidelity in Motion**

Design **Obviously Creative**

SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, Christian Bartsch, Michael Berryman, Janus Blythe, Mark Holdom, Mikel J. Koven, Susan Lanier, Peter Locke, Barbara McCarney, Jeremy Mincer, Todd Sigmon, Martin Speer, Paul White

This release is dedicated to the memory of Wes Craven – thank you for the nightmares.