

Short Review: “Battle Beyond the Stars” (1980) by Dr. John L. Flynn



Battle Beyond the Stars (1980). New World Pictures, 103 min. Director: Jimmy T.

Murakami. Producers: Roger Corman and Ed Carlin. Screenwriter: John Sayles. Cast: Richard Thomas, Robert Vaughn, George Peppard, John Saxon, Sybil Danning, Morgan Woodward, and Darlance Fluegel.

This science-fictional remake of “The Magnificent Seven” (1960), which itself was a remake of “The Seven Samurai” (1954), debuted in the wake of “Star Wars,” and was treated unfairly as a low-budget rip-off. But Corman’s production is actually a clever take on a familiar theme.

When a ruthless conqueror named Sador (Saxon) threatens to destroy the peaceful planet of Akir, Shad (Thomas) takes off in a spaceship to enlist the aide of intergalactic soldiers of fortune. His mission to find seven warriors (including Robert Vaughn reprising his doomed gunfighter role from “The Magnificent Seven”) takes up about half of the movie, and by the time we get back to his home planet Akir, we’re ready for some rip-roaring space battles. And Vaughn, Peppard, Woodward, Danning, Fluegel and the other warriors don’t disappoint us! Thanks to the early special effects work of James Cameron, the battles in space and on the ground are exciting and colossal. Ultimately, they lead to a showdown between Shad and Sador. The script by John Sayles is both huge and spectacular, and the rest of the work is top notch. Cameron met his

future partner and collaborator, Gale Anne Hurd, while he was creating the effects and she was working as a production assistant. “Battle Beyond the Stars” was a commercial success despite its over-concentration on hardware and special effects at the expense of character. Jimmy Murakami's direction lacked the deft touch to bring the stereotyped characters to life, and too much of the film relied on familiar lines and situations drawn from “The Magnificent Seven.” Particularly enjoyed Sybil Danning’s turn as the sexy and competent St. Xmen.

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