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'Creature' Movie Review

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By [Mark H. Harris](#), About.com Guide

*Creature*¹ is a little independent film with a big appetite, a small gator in a big pond seeking to make a splash [outside the studio system](#)² by engineering a wide theatrical release without the benefit of studio distribution. But as impressive as the behind-the-scenes wrangling is, is the movie itself good enough to deserve such wide exposure?

The Plot

Six 20-something tourists -- Niles (Mehdad Brooks), his girlfriend Emily (Serinda Swan), Emily's brother Randy (Aaron Hill), Randy's girlfriend Beth (Amanda Fuller), and brother and sister Oscar (Dillon Casey) and Karen (Lauren Schneider) -- decide to take the scenic route through rural Louisiana on their way to party in New Orleans. They stop for gas in Fort Collins, a small town hit hard by economic depression, sink holes and the legend of Lockjaw, a half-man, half-gator that supposedly roams the nearby swamps.



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According to legend, Lockjaw was a man named Grimley (Daniel Bernhardt) whose true love (and sister; these are backwoods folk) was killed by a white alligator. Grimley went crazy, hunted the animal down, killed it and then proceeded to eat every bit of meat (including human) it had stored in its lair. Somehow that experience transformed the man into the object of his hatred, and ever since then, the humanoid Lockjaw has stalked the swamps, searching for both food and a bride.

Gas station owner Chopper (Sid Haig) points the curious group in the direction of Grimley's old home, and since they're not due in New Orleans for another day, they decide to go sightseeing on foot. Little do they realize that the legend of Lockjaw is no mere legend. The creature is out there, and the six of them are treading on its turf.

The End Result

Creature is the sort of film you have to view with lowered expectations. Although it's playing in theaters nationwide, everything about it is generally a notch below the standard wide-release fright flick. Think of it more as a [Syfy movie of the week](#)⁴, and you might be pleasantly surprised. *Creature* is a refreshingly old school horror movie, with a simple story (creature vs. kids), real-world makeup effects (no cheesy CGI) and a boatload of gore and nudity.

But, like its pulpy inspirations, *Creature* is not without its faults. The characters are shallow clichés (inbred rednecks anyone?), the ridiculous plot is riddled with ambiguity and jumps in logic, and although the gore effects are well done, the monster itself looks amateurish, like a [Killer Croc](#)⁵ Halloween costume.

The movie could've gotten away with such shoddiness if it bought more into its own inherent camp value; it *is* about a gator-man, after all. There's a good amount of blood 'n guts, but the filmmakers could've gone bigger and more splatter-ific, a la another recent Louisiana swamp flick, *Hatchet*⁶. Another lesson it could've learned from *Hatchet* is to play up the humor, which, if you notice Lockjaw's distractingly hairy anatomically correctness, is quite literally staring you in the face. If the creature isn't scary, you may as well make it funny.

The Skinny

- **Acting:** C (The supporting cast, led by Sid Haig, is much more lively and interesting than the two flat leads.)
- **Direction:** C+ (The film has a nice look, despite the limited budget.)
- **Script:** D+ (Vague and shallow; the inherently silly story doesn't play up the humor.)
- **Gore/Effects:** B (Creature design is a bit hokey, but there is ample gore.)
- **Overall:** C (A fast-moving, albeit disposable, creature feature that delivers the basics of what horror fans crave.)

Creature is directed by Fred M. Andrews and is rated R by the MPAA for bloody violence, grisly images, some sexual content, graphic nudity, language, and brief drug usage. Release date: September 9, 2011.

Disclosure: The distributor provided free access to this movie for review purposes. For more information, please see our [Ethics Policy](#)⁷.

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Sid Haig in 'Creature'.

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