

SLITHER
CHICAGO TRIBUNE
Daily Circ: 586,122
Sunday Circ: 950,582
3/31/06
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B/W Photo
Review

'Slither' mixes giggles with its shivers

Dose of wit rare
for an alien-attack,
horror-genre item

By Michael Phillips
Tribune arts critic

It's not Ernst Lubitsch, but the space-slug/mutant-zombie fiesta called "Slither" has an actual sense of humor to go with its voluminous alien ook. Director and screenwriter James Gunn wrote the "Dawn of the Dead" remake and, less fortunately but more profitably, the two "Scooby-Doo" pictures. This one is a blood relative of "Dawn of the Dead," which in this case is a fine thing.

It's deer hunting season in Wheezy, S.C. Little do its townsfolk realize that an antagonist is flying their way at a zillion miles an hour: a slug-infested asteroid, hosting a species of critter hellbent on interstellar domination.

The rock lands in the woods outside town, cracks open and soon sticks a pair of nasty tentacles into the tummy of its first victim, a local business impresario (Michael Rooker). Before long his wife (Elizabeth Banks), notices a change in her man. For one thing, their sex life improves. Then, side effects: He starts sprouting squidlike tentacles out of his head. "You're just sick, is all," she says. This is the comic strategy of "Slither" in a nutshell—chipper underreaction to the darnedest things.

Like Peter Jackson's "Dead Alive," another really, really gory comedy, "Slither" transforms



Starla Grant (Elizabeth Banks) discovers her husband's heinous stockpile of horror in their basement in the humorous genre-bending alien-invasion flick, "Slither."

into a zombie picture as more and more townsfolk get theirs. The film grows wearying in its

later scenes, and there's a grating performance from Gregg Henry as the bug-eyed mayor.

REVIEW

'Slither'

★ ★ ★

Written and directed by James Gunn; cinematography by Gregory Middleton; production design by Andrew Naskoromny; music by Tyler Bates; edited by John Axelrad; produced by Paul Brooks. A Universal Studios release; opens Friday. Running time: 1:35.

Bill Pardy Nathan Fillion
Starla Grant Elizabeth Banks
Jack MacReady Gregg Henry
Grant Grant Michael Rooker

But at his best Gunn displays a witty visual streak.

At one point, with a vulnerable teenager (Tania Saulnier) in a tub, the camera scoots along the bubbly surface right behind one of the invading footlong, blood-red slugs.

It's suspenseful, and it gets a laugh. Throughout, writer/director Gunn took it upon himself to mess with old formulas in sprightly new ways.

Aside from Henry, Gunn's cast is on a collective wavelength. Banks, whose perkiness carries a slightly demented edge, matches up well with Nathan Fillion, who plays the lovelorn police chief. In the end "Slither" may be too squirrely and consciously jokey to seduce its target audience, the one continually turning out for dour junk like the "Saw" movies and "The Hills Have Eyes" redux. Yet some of us appreciate an exploitation number whose metaphoric heart is in the highlands, even at its most stomach-turning.

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MPAA rating: R (for strong horror violence and gore, and language).



SPACE INVADERS: Gregg Henry and Elizabeth Banks confront slimy critters from outer space in the genre-bending sci-fi horror yarn *Slither*.

SLITHER
FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM
Daily Circ: 249,333
Sunday Circ: 323,373
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Color Photo
Review

Creepy-crawly chic

Who knew that alien slugs who turn humans into flesh-eating zombies could be this fun?

By CARY DARLING
STAR-TELEGRAM POP CULTURE CRITIC

Straight-up slasher chic may be back in vogue at the multiplex, but the torturers and murderers may find themselves outpaced this year by an attack of the creepy-crawlies. One of the most breathlessly anticipated films of the summer is *Snakes on a Plane* — whose very name has sparked an entire Internet cottage industry — and opening Friday is *Slither*, which could have been subtitled *Slugs in My Brain*.

Written and directed by James Gunn, who is best known for penning the 2004 remake of *Dawn of the Dead*, *Slither* is an enjoyable, tongue-well-in-cheek pastiche of every alien-invasion B-movie from the '50s through the '80s. Although *Slither* isn't a full-on parody like *Scary Movie*, Gunn's directorial debut doesn't take things too seriously either. The film is closer to the goofy charm of *Evil Dead 2* than the serious butchering of *Saw II*.

All the clichés are here: a meteor plummeting to earth, bearing the seeds of mankind's destruction; a small town cut off from the rest of America; a jut-jawed sheriff as hero; a pretty blonde in distress; hundreds of slimy slugs feasting on human brains; an infestation spreading like a virus; idiot secondary characters who exist only to be sacrificed to the special-effects gods; and flesh-eating zombies. What's not to like?

At first glance, Wheezy, S.C., seems like the perfect little community. Sure, Sheriff Bill Pardy (Nathan Fillion) is

upset that Starla (Elizabeth Banks), the woman he's carried a torch for since high school, is married to Grant (Michael Rooker), the town's richest man. But everything's OK until that nasty meteor strike, when alien crawlers begin seeking out human hosts — starting with a too-curious Grant — to

carry out a nefarious plan for universal domination. And nothing sparks unrequited love more than when a woman's husband mutates into a monster mollusk.

Fillion, already a cult figure as the top gun in the *Firefly/Serenity* franchise, brings the right

amount of two-fisted heroics and smart-aleck humor. Banks doesn't have much to do but look scared, but that's fitting for a movie like this. Character actor Gregg Henry, who seems to always play the bad guy, adds extra kick as the town's craven mayor, chewing the scenery like it's a cheap Las Vegas buffet.

But despite some major gross-out moments, *Slither* may not go far enough for fans of the genre. While Gunn obviously intends his film to be part homage to the likes of Sam Raimi (the *Evil Dead* series), George Romero (the *Living Dead* movies), Stuart Gordon (*Re-Animator*) and early, pre-hobbit Peter Jackson (*Dead Alive* aka *Braindead*, *Bad Taste*), *Slither* never reaches those levels of delirious, jaw-dropping excess.

Still, you take your angry-critter joys where you can get them. Until *Snakes on a Plane* comes along, *Slither* will have to do.

Slither

D Director: James Gunn
Stars: Nathan Fillion, Elizabeth Banks, Gregg Henry, Michael Rooker
Length: 96 min.
Rated: R (horror, gore, violence, strong language)

So slimy, so silly, and so good

By Ty Burr
GLOBE STAFF

At last: the mutant alien red-neck zombie movie the world has been waiting for. "Slither" is cheap, disgusting, and ridiculous; it's also smart, very funny, and knowingly in touch with its B-movie roots. The faint of heart should skip it, but if your guilty-pleasure tastes run to such storied horror-comedies as "Re-Animator" and "Tremors," here's your cup of extraterrestrial gastropod guts.

Before a meteor lands on the edge of town, not much happens in Wheelsy besides deer season and inbreeding. Mayor Jack MacReady (Gregg Henry) is a blow-dried pottymouth, while police chief Bill Pardy (Nathan Fillion of "Serenity") pines for his childhood sweetheart, schoolteacher Starla (Elizabeth Banks). Unfortunately, she's married to Grant Grant (Michael Rooker), the macho blow-hard who's Wheelsy's leading citizen.

Even more unfortunately, Grant gets too close to a pulsing pile of slime in the woods, and soon he's haunting the deli counter at the supermarket, growling, "Meat." Say what you will about the man, he does love his wife, even after he transforms into a giant tentacled slime monster. The mayor's convinced it's just Lyme disease; the police aren't so sure and plot their quarry's whereabouts on a map with little squid icons.

Every worthwhile horror movie since "Alien" has its carefully worked out evolutionary calculus, and "Slither" is no different. One of Grant's early victims becomes a giant human womb that releases millions of blood-red slugs that fan out across town, leaping into people's mouths and turning them into zombies controlled by the Grant/alien thingie. This means that whenever Starla encounters one of the undead, he or she insists on working out the couple's domestic issues. Can you *do* couples therapy with a hive mind?

The slug-attack sequences are giddy and terrifying -- drive-in



UNIVERSAL PICTURES VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

In the gorefest "Slither," Elizabeth Banks (with Nathan Fillion and Don Thompson) confronts her slime-monster husband.

Slither

Written and directed by: James Gunn
Starring: Nathan Fillion, Elizabeth Banks, Michael Rooker, Gregg Henry
At: Boston Common, Fenway, suburbs
Running time: 96 minutes
Rated: R (strong horror violence and gore, language, slug trails)
★★★

cheese at its creepiest -- and the bathtub scene lives up to its billing on the film's poster. "Slither" does for taking a good, long soak what "Jaws" did for swimming in the ocean.

As rousing as it is, the gore's for the diehards. What makes a good horror-comedy work -- as opposed to all the teen dice-and-slice "product" that clogs up multiplexes -- is sharp performances, sharper timing, and a willingness to admit to the genre's fundamental silliness.

"Slither" has all three. The acting is playful aces all around: Fillion gives good exhausted incredulity, Banks gives good virginal idiocy, and Rooker gives great conflicted monster arrogance even before the aliens get him. The film moves forward with the relentlessness of a low-budget nightmare, pausing every so often to point, giggle, shriek, and run away.

Writer-director James Gunn

has been around the block, and "Slither" is a winking resume of his influences. The town's beer joint is named Henenlotter's in honor of the director of the grindhouse classic "Basket Case" (1982), while David Cronenberg's 1975 "They Came From Within" gets a viscous shout-out. Gunn earned his stripes writing scripts for the Z-movie studio Troma, which accounts for the company's president, Lloyd Kaufman, showing up in a cameo as a wino. He also wrote the recent "Dawn of the Dead" remake, which explains this movie's deep knowledge of zombie behavioral habits (i.e., they never run but can only totter).

Still, it's Gunn's love of the absurd that keeps "Slither" sailing along its bloody track. After a series of developments that raise the ick factor to jaw-dropping levels, the movie scores the climactic showdown between Starla and what used to be her husband to the couple's favorite song. Who knew that when Air Supply recorded its gloriously sappy 1980 hit "Every Woman in the World," it would find its true meaning as the expression of the love between a woman and her slug.

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A horror-comedy in a rural town

By **GARY THOMPSON**

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Peering into my B-movie crystal ball, I see a short theatrical run for "Slither," followed by what could be eternal life on TBS.

It's a horror-comedy about crawling slugs that invade an isolated, rural community — a movie very much in the spirit of cable fave "Tremors," another tongue-in-cheek chiller that would rather be funny than scary.

This one features Nathan Fillion (star of the stalled "Serenity" franchise) as a sheriff who watches over a sleepy Texas town while pining for his high school sweet-

REVIEW

B

SLITHER

Parents' guide: Rated R for gore and bad language

Running time: 95 minutes

Showing at: Area theaters

Bill: Nathan Fillion

Starlet: Elizabeth Banks

Grant: Michael Rooker

heart (Elizabeth Banks), who decided to marry the town rich guy (Michael Rooker), and who probably can't hide her lyn' eyes.

Catastrophic bad luck for the town is good luck for the sheriff's romantic prospects: A meteor carrying a self-replicating alien parasite lands near town (don't

you hate that?). The alien invades Rooker's character, turning him into a giant squidish monster that enslaves other townspeople as host bodies for an alien parasite breeding program.

Some are fed meat and serve as incubators, others have a brain worm that turns them into zombies. This sets the stage for some always-enjoyable zombie-thumping, and conveniently removes the sheriff's rival.

Writer-director James Gunn has walked this path before with his snarky remake of "Dawn of the Dead," showing a macabre sense of humor that worked more often than not, even if it didn't scale the delirious heights of "Sean of the Dead."

Gunn has a knack for funny compositions and oddball situations, often unrelated to his facetious story; the biggest laugh in "Slither" is a throwaway bit about a woman in a karaoke bar taking a shot at "The Crying Game." Best shot: An alien slug wriggles through the bath bubbles toward a nubile teen, looking uncannily like the animated sperm cell from a high school health-class film.

"Slither" turns out to be an improbably good time — it will go well with popcorn, even better with a couch and a beer. ★

Produced by Paul Brooks, written and directed by James Gunn, music by Tyler Bates, distributed by Universal Pictures.



Terrified mayor Gregg Henry sheds light on a basement of gruesome terror.

There is life out there, and it's mighty gross

By Neva Chonin

CHRONICLE CRITIC AT LARGE

A movie character knows the world's gone to hell when he survives a zombie offensive only to be attacked by a carnivorous deer. Of course, if the character is in "Slither," he's already faced a giant squid thing, thousands of brain-stealing slugs and an exploding human balloon. A bloodthirsty deer just adds insult to injury.

In a variety of forms, "Slither" excels in imaginative gore and shows that first-time director James Gunn — who penned the screenplay for "Dawn of the Dead" (2004) — has learned much about the joys of linking humor and horror. In this case, he pastiches both the zombie and alien-invasion genres while preserving the endearing inanity of both, resulting in a B-movie whose laughs are as intentional as its explosive, gross-out effects.

The premise is as subtle as an aneurism. A meteor lands outside a folksy burg in North Carolina, disgorging an alien blob that quickly possesses an upstanding citizen named Grant Grant (Michael Rooker), husband to the lovely Starla (Elizabeth Banks). Things start going bad in the town of Wheezy faster than you can say "killer brain worms." Maybe it's those festering carcasses mysteriously stockpiled in an isolated barn; maybe it has something to do with folks and their pets going missing. It could be it's the oversize slugs crawling down Main Street, or Grant Grant's sudden craving for raw hamburger.

Say, was that a human squid out there in the cow field?

Enter our hero, the slow-talking, tight-trouser-wearin' Sheriff Bill Pardy (Nathan Fillion), who sets to saving the planet and keeping the lovely Starla from her husband's mutant clutches. Fillion



Slither: Horror. Starring Nathan Fillion, Elizabeth Banks, Gregg Henry and Michael Rooker. Directed

by James Gunn. Running time: 106 minutes (Rated R. At Bay Area theaters.)

delivers his lines with a deadpan conviction that does his Malcolm Reynolds role in "Serenity" proud, while Banks' Starla steals the film with her treatise on marital fealty, delivered to a husband-turned-killer squid.

There's a special delight in watching a town where nothing ever happens suddenly playing host to a hootenanny from hell. Gunn aims for broad targets and hits them every time, whether lampooning the Wheezy yokels and their deer-hunting ways or suggesting the family that slays together stays together when a teenager's zombic kin urges her to join in "family fun day." The whole film balances excess with understatement, as when the Sheriff attempts a post-bloodbath pep talk ("So, how we all doing tonight?").

Gunn plumbs such horror cliches for laughs without mocking them. Along the way, he gives visual shout-outs to genre conventions, from ubiquitous monster's-eye-view camera angles to a brief television clip from the cult favorite, "The Toxic Avenger." Gunn knows his roots, and mines them for every slimy groan they've got. The results are as campy as they're supposed to be, because "Slither" is a labor of love made by a horror aficionado who knows just when to tweak the tropes.

► **Advisory:** Contains violence, sexual situations, foul language and cannibalism.

E-mail Neva Chonin at nchonin@sfchronicle.com.



CHRIS HELGERMANAS / Universal Studios

Chief Bill Pardy (Nathan Fillion) and Kylie Strutemyer (Tania Saulnier), attempt to escape a slug-infected zombie.

ShortTAKES

Fun 'Slither' mixes humor with horror

"Slither"

★★½

Strictly speaking, I'm not sure you could describe the form of locomotion that propels the slimy slugs of this good-natured zombie comedy down people's throats as "slithering." They stream, like an army of giant red corpuscles, flowing across the pastures of rural Wheezy until they arrive at the mouth of someone who has opened wide to scream.

Ditto the burrowing worms that are shot from a fallen meteor into the cheatin' heart cavity of Grant Grant (Michael Rooker). Grant's pretty young wife Starla (Elizabeth Banks) gets a clue that something may be wrong when her husband's face suddenly turns to farina. Seeing her revulsion when he returns from the woods looking like a Francis Bacon painting, Grant says unpersuasively, "It was just a bee sting."

The town of Wheezy is gearing up for its biggest night of the year — the countdown to the start of deer hunting season — when bulletin boards begin filling up with fliers for missing dogs. Starla's suspicions are further aroused when she breaks the padlock her husband has put on the basement door, and descends into the stench of an abattoir filled with retrievers and coyotes. The next time she sees Grant, his arm has become snake-like, although it doesn't slither either.

When the mayor (Gregg Henry) tells the town's sheriff (Nathan Fillion) that he fears word of these rampaging slugs could ruin deer season, the movie momentarily turns into a kind of gross-out version of "Jaws." But writer-director James Gunn, who wrote the script for the 2004 remake of the zombie classic "Dawn of the Dead," keeps the blood and guts flying and the dialogue sharp. After Grant and the worms have their way with Brenda Gutierrez (Brenda James), she becomes so addicted to raw meat that she has come to resemble a giant tumor by the time the sheriff finds her. In what turns out to be her last request, Brenda asks, "Would you mind handing me a piece of that possum?"

Gunn isn't out to send up zombie movies, just add some outrageous humor to enliven the genre of the walking dead. And in *that* way, at least, "Slither" slithers.

Rated: R (profanity, violence,

brief nudity). 1 hour, 36 minutes.

— Bruce Newman
Mercury News

SLITHER

SEATTLE TIMES

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Sunday Circ: 495,000

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MOVIE REVIEW ★★★

"Slither," with Nathan Fillion, Elizabeth Banks, Michael Rooker, Gregg Henry. Written and directed by James Gunn. 96 minutes. Rated R for strong horror violence and gore, and language. Several theaters.

Horror-buff bait? Outer-space slugs!

By Jeff Shannon /
Special to The Seattle Times

Good news, fright fans: "Slither" is the best horror comedy since "Shaun of the Dead" — but that won't comfort the folks of Wheelsy, S.C.

In writer-director James Gunn's gonzo valentine to the gross-out horror films of the '70s and '80s, Wheelsy is under siege by slugs from outer space. Before long they've mutated the local yokels into redneck zombies controlled by slimy parasites with a hearty appetite for red meat. Preferably rib-eye steak, but human flesh will do in a pinch.

Local businessman Grant (Michael Rooker) is victim No. 1, destined to become the parasitical host with the most (tentacles, that is). While Wheelsy's mayor (comedic

scene-stealer Gregg Henry) floats dimwit theories about the growing infestation ("maybe it's Lyme disease!"), newly promoted police chief Pardy (Nathan Fillion, star of "Serenity") joins Grant's wife (Elizabeth Banks) in an effort to stop the invasion before Wheelsy turns into Slugville.

If you're not hooked, move along and let us horror fans have some fun.

As a former colleague of Z-movie king Lloyd Kaufman of Troma Films infamy, Gunn wrote trash classics like "Tromeo & Juliet" before penning 2004's "Dawn of the Dead" remake. He's got a gift for combining throwaway gags with the kind of gloppy gore that reached its pinnacle in John Carpenter's 1982 remake of "The Thing."

With additional nods to di-



CHRIS HELCERMANAS-BENGE

Gregg Henry needs a beer ...
to dump on sluglike aliens.

rectors like David Cronenberg (a local shop is named after "Videodrome" antihero Max Renn) and Frank Henenlotter ("Basket Case"), "Slither" is a movie only true horror buffs can love. Its greatest strength is that it never aspires to be anything more than it is: 96 minutes of good laughs and retro-splatter.

Of course, there's a little something extra for those who sit through the credits.

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black &
white
photo

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THE DETROIT NEWS
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Sunday Circ: 537,177
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Review

'Slither' pays tribute to everything gory

A B-movie does a good job of combining dark comedy with disgusting moments.

By TOM LONG
Detroit News Film Critic

A great bloody joy of B-movie madness, "Slither" is a hilarious concoction of gore and wisecracks that offers plenty of nods to horror history while maintaining enough slimy integrity to stand, or rather, slither, on its own.

Written and directed by James Gunn, who also wrote the top-drawer remake of "Dawn of the Dead," and starring the impeccable Nathan Fillion, who led the cast of last year's "Serenity," "Slither" manages to pay tribute to alien invasion, zombie and creepy creature movies all at once. That it does this while deftly balancing gross-out moments and slapstick comedy is all the more impressive.

You may have seen the trailers featuring thick pink slugs that like to leap down folk's throats and take over their brains. Well, the slugs are really only a small part of what's going on here.

On the other hand, there are few things more likely to gross people out than the idea of a hefty slug charging down the gullet, so it's a good image for the movie to hang its twisted hat on.

Gunn establishes his B intentions right from the beginning, when a giant meteor hurtling through space aimed directly at Earth turns out to be about the size of a pumpkin when it lands near a small country town. Ah, but from small things big things one day come.

Soon enough, a fellow named Grant Grant (B-movie mainstay Michael Rooker) stumbles upon a slug that has emerged from the meteor. And in the manner of so

If slime and guts with a heavy side of humor is your cup of tea, "Slither" is your movie.

many great alien-infection movies, Grant finds his mind and body taken over.

Soon, Grant is gathering meat of all kinds to feed a woman he has alien-impregnated. And boy, does she turn out to be hungry. But Grant's schoolmarm wife (Elizabeth Banks) notices that he seems to be going through some changes, the most notable being that his face is covered in red pustules, his skull is tilting to one side and his mouth seems to be melting.

This concerns her, so she calls in the local sheriff (Fillion) just as Grant's body seems to be stretching out in strange ways. Soon he is labeled the human

squid and the chase is on to capture him.

And the chase is indeed delicious, in an exploding heads, stumbling zombie army, flood of slugs sort of way. Eventually the sheriff, the schoolmarm, the town's wondrous jerk of a mayor (stalwart Gregg Henry) and a young girl who's had a taste of the slug (Tania Saulnier) are the ones being chased as the town is taken over.

Gunn the novice director is glad he's working with Gunn the crackerjack writer here. The opening meteor bit isn't delivered near as well as it should be, and the film's first 15 or so minutes meander a bit (although this is in keeping with B-movie set-ups).

But once this slimefest gets rolling, it's pretty much nonstop laughs and grimaces, thanks in great part to Fillion's countrified deadpan (attention, producers, this guy's the real deal, use him). You have to be in the mood for flesh eating and full-body explosions, of course, but who's not up for that?

Well, lots of people, obviously, and they should stay away from this film. But if slime and guts with a heavy side of humor is your cup of tea, "Slither" is your movie.

Review 'Slither'

GRADE: B+

Rated R for strong horror violence and gore, and language

Running time: 96 minutes

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Universal

Brenda James and Michael Rooker star in "Slither," an alien-invasion movie filled with gross-out scenes.



SLITHER

★ Starring Nathan Fillion, Elizabeth Banks, Michael Rooker

★ Director-screenwriter: James Gunn

★ Now showing at Area 51

★ Rated R for strong horror violence and gore and language

★ Running time: 95 minutes

CHRIS HELGEMANAS-RENEA / UNIVERSAL STUDIOS
 A SLIMY DISCOVERY: Grant (Michael Rooker) and others from Wheezy come across something not from this world in *Slither*.

Creepy-crawlies mix with humor in *Slither*

BY LOUIS B. PARKS
 HOUSTON CHRONICLE

BEFORE bursting into a barn to face a grotesque killer alien, a small-town sheriff and his deputy play rock-paper-scissors to see who goes in first.

One. Two. Three.

The deputy does rock, but, seeing the sheriff has paper, he quickly sticks out two fingers to make scissors. Sheriff goes first.

Inside the barn, the sheriff finds not the alien but a local woman whose face is now attached to a pink body swelled to the size of a humpback whale. When she bursts we learn she was impregnated by the alien and is full of about a trillion slimy, slithering red slugs that want to crawl into your mouth and turn you into a flesh-craving (is there another kind?) zombie.

Slither is seriocomic horror, alternating laughs with goey, creepy scares. Director-screenwriter James Gunn (writer of *Dawn of the Dead* and *Scooby-Do!*) has combined a 1950s sci-fi plot with gross-out

gore to make an effective — if familiar — horror film. *Slither* calls to mind *Tremors*, *Twin Peaks* and *Lake Placid* as much as *Night of the Living Dead*.

An asteroid crashes to Earth in the woods near the town of

Wheezy. A fragment hatches open to reveal a squishy blob that shoots — *Alien*-like — a needle into the chest of a local man named Grant. Within days Grant is buying all the raw meat in town and getting grotesque bumps and rashes all over.

"It's from a bee sting," Grant tells his wife.

She snaps to the truth when she finds missing pets and varmint rotting in their basement. (*Slither* is not afraid to break the movie taboo against dogicide. It also has a zombie deer.)

Placing the film in Bumpkinville, U.S.A., lets Gunn have fun with small-town and horror-movie clichés. Most of the in-

habitants are hicks focused on Wheezy's Family Fun Day (sorry, kids, not this year) and on the annual Deer Cheer festivities, when they can start blasting away at the Bambi population.

The cast helps Gunn's off-beat, mostly verbal humor work, especially Nathan Fillion (*Serenity*) as Sheriff Bill. Someone tells Bill, "Be careful," as he's about to run into a house full of zombies. Fillion deadpans, "Yeah, there's a thought," into a laugh.

Familiar heavy Michael Rooker is Grant, the man who turns into the tentacled, glop-faced creature. Even as an alien space entity, he retains romantic feelings for his wife, Starla (Elizabeth Banks of *Seabiscuit*). His attempts to love her up despite his grossness is a running scare-joke. Gregg Henry, another regular villain, is the

town's obscenity-spewing mayor who still wants his Mr. Pibb, zombies or no zombies.

Obscenity and gore — there's plenty of both — account for the film's rating. When a deputy tries to reason with Grant, the half-man, half-creature flashes a tentacle at him. A second later the deputy, not yet realizing he has been slit in two from head to heels, slowly peels open, exposing wet, red innards, and falls to the ground.

There's also a scene, uncomfortably like rape, in which the alien tentacles from inside Grant's chest thrust into a woman's chest and impregnate her with slug babies. Leave the kids at home.

Slither is never terrifying, but it is scary in an "oh, yuck, that nasty thing is going to

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touch her" way. Every squeamish moment is overlaid with a funny one, every joke with another gross-out shot. It's amusing if you're into that sort of thing.

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SLITHER
CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER
Daily Circ: 354,309
Sunday Circ: 479,131
Friday, March 31, 2006
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Wire Review
Color Photo

"SLITHER"

R for extreme gore, violence, strong language and sexual situations. 96 minutes. Area theaters.

B A wild mash-up of "The Blob" and John Carpenter's "The Thing," with an alien slug turning a small rural community into an army of flesh-eating zombies. Good, gross fun that knows who it's borrowing from — and repays its debts with some rude jokes and plenty of gory, over-the-top horror. — *Newhouse News Service*



SLITHER
MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE
Daily Circ: 378,727
Sunday Circ: 674,668
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reviewed in brief

SLITHER

★★★ out of four stars

Rating: R for strong horror violence and gore, and language.

The setup for this screamysquirmy horror comedy is nothing new. A small town is attacked by a deadly alien menace and a microcosm of society battles back. We've seen the idea in "Jaws" and "Tremors," but it's been years since it's been presented so cleverly and energetically.

"Slither" takes place in a hick town where deer season commences just as a meteorite bearing carnivorous space slugs lands in the forest. The none-too-alert sheriff (Nathan Fillion, "Serenity") is slow to see the menace, and doesn't spring into action until his high school sweetheart (Elizabeth Banks) is endangered by her mutating husband, who, half-transformed into a giant squid-thing, assures her: "It's only a bee sting, honey." Before you can say "zombie," half the town is drooling and hungry for fresh flesh.

Writer/director James Gunn has Frankensteined his film together with bits and pieces borrowed from fright classics, sprinkling in-jokes throughout, but you don't have to be a horror film junkie to savor Fillion's fine work as the hapless hero. His look of chagrin as his battle plans fizzle is pure gold. There is a huge amount of bloodshed, but it's so comically tongue-in-cheek that it's hard to take offense — it's more gross than gory. Gunn is



UNIVERSAL PICTURES

Starla Grant (Elizabeth Banks) and the local lawmen (Nathan Fillion, center, and Don Thompson) come face-to-face with her mutant husband, foreground) in "Slither."

a graduate of the Troma film factory, the studio that made the zany "Toxic Avenger," and he understands the pleasures of well-crafted trash. His shamelessly entertaining directing debut is smart, full of solid scares, and probably a cult classic in the making.

COLIN COVERT

SLITHER
ST. PAUL PIONEER PRESS
Daily Circ: 191,000
Sunday Circ: 254,000
3/31/06
Page 1 of 1
Color Photo
Review



Brenda Gutierrez (Brenda James, left, if you can believe it) asks for a snack from Chief Bill Pardy (Nathan Fillion) and Officer Wally Whale (Don Thompson) in "Slither," a horror movie that screams "drive-in."

SLITHER ★★★

'Slither's' obese zombies comically create 'Night of the Living Fed'

BY CHRIS HEWITT
Movie Critic

Ah, spring, when a young moviegoer's heart turns to the drive-in.

Anyway, I could not stop thinking about the upcoming drive-in season while I watched the horror comedy "Slither," because it's gonna look great up there on the big, outdoor screen. Its jokey tone, low-fi special effects and gruesome chills practically scream, "Tip back the driver's seat, suck on a gallon of Coke, and let the fun begin."

A throwback to '50s monster movies,

"Slither" is played for laughs and squirms. It's set in a Southern town besieged by outer-space slugs that crawl right into human hosts' mouths (this alien invasion is especially invasive), transforming them into Jabba the Hutt look-alikes who crave meat. These zombies, apparently, are Atkins zombies.

It's just barely possible "Slither" is attempting a comment on America's obesity epidemic ("Don't you judge me," howls one of the plus-sized ghoul). But you don't want to read too much into a movie that climaxes with a

disgusting zombie seduction scene that may remind you of Jabba coming on to Leia, except he didn't have Air Supply to help seal the deal. What you want to do, instead, is sit back and get your creep on.

What: "Slither"

Directed by: James Gunn

Starring: Nathan Fillion

Rated: R, for very strong language and violence, plus partial nudity

Should you go? Yup, and don't leave until the credits are over. ★★★

SLITHER (R) ★★★

Stop it — you're killing us

BY DAVID GERMAIN
Associated Press

In a world of brain-dead horror remakes, writer-director James Gunn didn't just set out to redo any old fright flick. In the body-snatchers-from-space tale *Slither*, he aimed to remake them all — and more.

With the gore-minded glee of a fan attuned to every cinematic scare tactic, Gunn also knows how silly they are, infusing *Slither* with a wicked sense of parody while still crafting a clever, maniacally

paced twist on B-movie slime-fests.

The first-time director, who wrote the screenplay for the 2004 remake *Dawn of the Dead*, also has assembled a far finer cast than the genre typically presents, led by Nathan Fillion of the cult TV series *Firefly* and its big-screen spin-off *Serenity*.

As Bill Pardy, the police chief in a hillbilly town overrun by killer slugs and flesh-munching zombies, Fillion expands on the droll flair he

mastered as skipper of the rickety spaceship *Serenity*.

Slither also lets Fillion cut loose and get really goofy, all the while maintaining his boyish rogue's charm. This guy deserves to be a major star.

Gunn nicely establishes the story in a quick opening segment as a meteor hurtles toward Earth. Cut to the Southern burgh of Wheezy, where a bored Pardy and a deputy fritter away time in a patrol car by checking the speed of a whippoorwill with

their radar gun.

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Things quickly speed up, though, as lunk-headed businessman Grant (Michael Rooker) stumbles on the meteorite and the giant, oozy slug that crawls out of it. Grant becomes host for a parasite that prompts him to hilariously — and gruesomely — stockpile raw meat and the carcasses of neighborhood pets in his basement.

He's also gradually transformed into a freakish, tentacle predator whose activities unleash hordes of slimy worms that turn the townsfolk into meat-hungry zombies.

Pardy and Grant's wife, Starla (Elizabeth Banks), with whom the police chief shares an unrequited-romantic history, race through a rip-roaring night of the living dead as they try to put down Grant and his zombie army.

The grisly creature effects and themes of parasitic possession pay respect to *The Thing*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, the *Alien* franchise, the George Romero zombie flicks and countless other creature features.

Gunn revels in the absurdities of horror conventions but

also clearly loves them. He's a real student of the stuff, piling on moments that embrace and spoof not only fright films but other movies.

When the alien infestation threatens to undermine Wheezy's annual deer-hunting festival, the mayor (Gregg Henry in an outrageously over-the-top comic performance) callously hopes to salvage the event, ala the mayor in *Jaws*.

And a scene where zombies do *A Streetcar Named Desire*, coming after Starla uttering her name instead of Marlon Brando's "Stella," is just priceless.

Hollywood has hit on a dependable little gold mine churning out shoddy horror remakes and other bad scary movies. Here's hoping someone like Gunn, who has a truly creative vision for the genre, can find the same commercial success.

Cast: Nathan Fillion, Elizabeth Banks, Michael Rooker, Gregg Henry, Don Thompson, Jenna Fischer, Tania Savitler

Writer-director: James Gunn
Producers: Paul Brooks, Eric Newman

A Universal release. Strong horror violence and gore, and language. Running time: 96 minutes. Playing at area theaters.

SLITHER
 TAMPA TRIBUNE
 DAILY CIRCULATION: 238,877
 SUNDAY CIRCULATION: 315,811
 DATE: 3/31/06
 PAGE: 1 OF 1
 REVIEW
 GRADE: B on scale of A-F
 COLOR PHOTO



Universal Pictures

Starla (Elizabeth Banks), Chief Pardy (Nathan Fillion, center) and Officer Whale (Don Thompson) approach a zombie in "Slither."

The alien-invasion send-up "Slither" is a throwback to horror movies at the drive-in.

(veteran character player Michael Rooker).

This poor husband wanders into the woods with a floozy (Brenda James) and comes back alienated in the worst way: A falling meteor (isn't it always a meteor) contains a horrible, parasitic alien life form that consumes his body and soul.

Worse, the monster reproduces by invading more humans and turning them into flesh-craving zombies.

It's more fun than you would expect. But be warned: There's lots of gore and even more profanity.

Even the mayor (Gregg Henry) has an incurably foul mouth.



Watch Bob Ross on Friday mornings on WFLA, News Channel 8.



Check out his online movie reviews, catch movie trailers and vote in our online poll on TBO.com.

Slime, Gore And Giggles

If you liked creepy, cheeky horror comedies, you mustn't miss "Slither," a demented throwback to the days before home video, when drive-in movies were our entertainment preference.

Set in a Southern hick town where drinking and deer hunting are the major pastimes, this alien-invasion send-up boasts gruesome effects, jokey dialogue and sly, self-mocking pop culture references.

The classy cast has a blast slumming here. Nathan Fillion ("Serenity," "Saving Private Ryan") plays a local cop who carries a torch for his old girlfriend (Elizabeth Banks from "Seabiscuit" and "The 40 Year-Old Virgin").

But the woman is already married to the local rich guy

MOVIE REVIEW

Slither: B

MOVIE BOARD RATING: R
 (Violence, Gore, Profanity)

STARS: Nathan Fillion, Elizabeth Banks, Michael Rooker, Gregg Henry

DIRECTOR: James Gunn

LOCATION: See Friday Extra for theaters and showtimes.

PLOT SUMMARY: Alien Invasion turns people into zombies.

RUNNING TIME: 92 minutes

ON THE WEB: www.slithermovie.net/

SLITHER
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH
Daily Circ. 322,000
Sunday Circ. 520,000
3/31/06

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Review

REVIEW | MOVIE

'Slither' satisfies a craving for fun horror

By Joe Williams

POST-DISPATCH FILM CRITIC

Who says a horror movie must be as bleak as a Swedish psychiatric ward? Old-school horror movies, from "Dracula" to "The Blob," were trying to sell popcorn, not chainsaws. But after "Psycho," the horror genre got openly psychological, and after "Halloween," it offered the implements of torture to the audience.

Yet, concurrent with the rise of sadistic horror, was the development of two slightly more rewarding genres: body horror films, such as David Cronenberg's remake of "The Fly," in which characters confront disease or mutation that festers from within; and schlock horror, low-budget films like "The Toxic Avenger" that merrily wallow in cheese.

Former St. Louisan James Gunn apprenticed with the New York producers of "The Toxic Avenger" before moving to Hollywood. After scripting the two "Sconby-Doo" movies and the sardonic remake of "Dawn of the Dead," Gunn makes his directorial debut with "Slither," an affectionate revival of the comic-horror and body-horror traditions of the 1980s.

Because it's neither highfalutin nor hateful, it's the most entertaining horror movie in years.

Late one night near the sleepy town of Whealsy, S.C., a UFO crashes into the forest. The pulsating pod is discovered by Grant Grant (Michael Rooker), a rich

'Slither'

Grade: B+

Rating: R, strong horror violence and gore, and language

Who should go:

Horror fans with a funny bone

Running time:

1:36

Opens: Today

'SLITHER' | FROM E1

It's horror, and it's fun

bully who's taking a walk after a fight with his virginal young wife, Starla (Elizabeth Banks). Grant's close encounter of the serpentine kind leaves him with a rabid hunger for red meat — store-bought, hunted or human.

Starla tries to overlook the leprous appendages that are growing out of her husband's head, but she can't deal with a cupboard full of carcasses. She runs to her old flame, Sheriff Bill Pardy (Nathan Fillion), while the fast-growing Grant plants his slithering seed in the town floozy (Brenda James), unleashing a plague of pustulent slugs and subservient zombies.

The special effects, a combination of gory make-up, animatronic tentacles and computer generation, are phenomenal. And a scene in which one of the phallic slugs climbs into a bathtub with an oblivious teenager is an instant classic of carnal horror.

Yet the movie is paced with such gusto, and Fillion is so archly funny as the put-upon hero, that we never feel like we're being held hostage by some brutal excuse for a movie.

The too-ambitious kitchen-sink finale underscores that the film was made by and for people who know the difference between movies and real life.

That's why, after gorging ourselves silly, we can walk away from "Slither" without feeling slimy.

joewilliams@post-dispatch.com
314-340-8344

PLEASE SEE 'SLITHER' | E2

'Slither' oozes with parodies

DAVID GERMAIN | THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In a world of brain-dead horror remakes, writer-director James Gunn didn't just set out to redo any old fright flick. In the body-snatchers tale "Slither," he aimed to remake them all — and more.

With the gore-minded glee of a fan attuned to every cinematic scare tactic, Gunn also knows how silly they are, infusing "Slither" with a wicked sense of parody while still crafting a clever, maniacally paced twist on B-movies.

The first-time director, who wrote the screenplay for the 2004 remake "Dawn of the Dead," also has assembled a far finer cast than the genre typically presents, led by Nathan Fillion of the cult TV series "Firefly" and its big-screen spinoff "Serenity."

As Bill Pardy, the police chief in a town overrun by killer slugs and flesh-munching zombies, Fillion expands on the droll flair he mastered as skipper of the rickety spaceship Serenity.

"Slither" also lets Fillion cut loose and get really goofy, all the while maintaining his boyish rogue's charm. This guy deserves to be a major star.

Movie Review

Slither

B (out of 10)

R; strong horror violence and gore, and language. Nathan Fillion, Michael Rooker, Elizabeth Banks. Directed by James Gunn. 96 minutes. For theaters, see Movie Guide, page 54.

Gunn nicely establishes the story in a quick opening segment as a meteor hurtles toward Earth. Cut to the Southern burg of Wheezy, where a bored Pardy and a deputy fritter away time in a patrol car by checking the speed of a whippoorwill with their radar gun.

They're so benumbed by the snail's pace of their town that they never notice the fiery flash behind them.

Things quickly speed up, though, as lunk-headed businessman Grant Grant (Michael Rooker) stumbles on the meteorite and the giant slug that crawls out of it. Grant becomes host for a parasite that prompts him to hilariously — and gruesomely — stockpile raw meat and the carcasses of neighborhood pets

in his basement.

He's also gradually transformed into a freakish, tentacled predator whose activities unleash hordes of slimy worms that turn the townsfolk into meat-hungry zombies.

Pardy and Grant's wife, Starla (Elizabeth Banks), with whom the police chief shares an unrequited romantic history, race through a rip-roaring night of the living dead as they try to put down Grant and his zombie army.

The grisly creature effects and themes of parasitic possession pay respect to "The Thing," "Invasion of the Body Snatchers," the "Alien" franchise, the George Romero zombie flicks and countless other creature features.

Gunn revels in the absurdities of horror conventions but also clearly loves them. He's a real student of the stuff, piling on moments that embrace and spoof not only fright films but other movies.

A scene where zombies do "A Streetcar Named Desire," uttering Starla's name instead of Marlon Brando's "Stella," is just priceless.

MOVIE REVIEW
 SLITHER

Parodies lend yuks to yucky fright fest

By David Germain
 ASSOCIATED PRESS

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The first-time director, who wrote the screenplay for the 2004 remake *Dawn of the Dead*, has assembled a far finer cast than the genre typically presents.

Nathan Fillion (*Prefly*, *Serenity*) plays Bill Parody, the police chief in a town overrun by killer slugs and flesh-munching zombies.

Fillion expands on the droll flair he mastered as skipper of the rickety spaceship *Serenity*.

Slither lets Fillion cut loose and get really goofy, all the while maintaining his boyish rogue's charm.

Gunn nicely establishes the story in a quick opening segment as a meteor hurtles toward Earth. The story cuts to the Southern burg of Wheelsey, where a bored Parody and a deputy fritter away time in a patrol car by checking the speed of a whippoorwill with their radar gun.

They're so benumbed by the snail's pace of their town that they never notice the flash behind them as the meteor crashes in the woods.

Things speed up as lunkheaded businessman Grant Grant (Michael Rooker) stumbles onto the meteorite and the giant



UNIVERSAL PICTURES

Starla (Elizabeth Banks) and officers Parody (Nathan Fillion) and Wally (Don Thompson) eye the alien.

Slither. Directed and written by James Gunn. Photographed by Gregory Mckidleton.

Bill Parody Nathan Fillion
 Starla Grant Elizabeth Banks
 Grant Grant Michael Rooker
 Jack MacReady Gregg Henry
 Kylie Strutemyer Tania Saulnier
 Brenda Gutierrez Brenda James
 Wally Don Thompson
 Margaret Jennifer Cooping
 Shelby Jenna Fischer
 Trevor Haig Sutherland

MPAA rating: R (for horror violence, gore, language).

Running time: 1 hour, 36 minutes.

Opening today at the Crossroads, Dublin Village 18, Easton 30, Georgesville Square 16, Lennox 24, Movies 10 at Westpointe, Movies 16 Gahanna, Pickerington 16 and Polaris 18 theaters.

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Grant becomes host for a parasite that prompts him to hilariously — and gruesomely — stockpile raw meat and the carcasses of neighborhood pets in his basement.

He's also gradually transformed into a freakish, tentacled predator whose activities unleash hordes of slimy worms that turn the townsfolk into meat-hungry zombies.

Parody and Grant's wife, Starla (Elizabeth Banks), with whom the police chief shares an unrequited romantic history, race through a rip-roaring night as

they try to put down Grant and his zombie army.

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Gunn is a real student of the stuff, piling on moments that embrace and spoof not only fright films but also other movies.

When the alien infestation threatens to undermine Wheelsey's annual deer-hunting festival, the mayor (Gregg Henry in an over-the-top comic performance) callously hopes to salvage the event, a la the mayor in *Jaws* who hoped to save his island's tourist season despite the killer shark.

An encounter with one of the parasites gives spunky teenager Kylie (Tania Saulnier) extraterrestrial insight, allowing her to explicate the creatures' nature and purpose the way Bill Pullman did in *Independence Day*.

And a scene in which zombies do *A Streetcar Named Desire* — coming after Starla, uttering her name instead of Marion Brando's "Stella" — is priceless.

Hollywood has hit on a dependable little gold mine churning out shoddy horror remakes. Here's hoping someone such as Gunn, who has a truly creative vision for the genre, can find the same commercial success.

SLITHER

DESERET NEWS/Salt Lake City

Daily Circ: 65,000

Sunday Circ: 70,000

Date: 3/31/06

Page: 1 of 1

'Slither' is cut above usual fare



FILM REVIEW

By David Germain

Associated Press

SLITHER — ★★★ — Nathan Fillion, Elizabeth Banks, Michael Rooker, R (violence, gore, profanity); see Page W2 for theaters.

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Pardy and Grant's wife, Starla (Elizabeth Banks), with whom the police chief shares an unrequited romantic history, race through a rip-roaring night of the living dead as they try to put down Grant and his zombie army.

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Hollywood has hit on a dependable little gold mine churning out shoddy horror remakes and other bad scary movies. Here's hoping someone like Gunn, who has a truly creative vision for the genre, can find the same commercial success.

"Slither" is rated R for strong horror violence, gore and language. Running time: 96 minutes.

SLITHER

EAST VALLEY TRIBUNE

Daily Circ. 113,964

Sunday Circ. 106,757

Date: 3/30/06

Page: 1 of 1

'Slither' apt to slide into sci-fi schlock hall of fame

BY CRAIG OUTHIER
GET OUT

Lewd, crude and unabashedly Freudian, "Slither" constitutes the single most delightful piece of low-budget sci-fi schlock since "Tremors." Writer-director James Gunn's deadpan hilarious tale of a rural American town besieged by mouth-invading slugs has the brains — and guts — to instantly qualify for George A. Romero-style gross-out sainthood.

Gunn, the "Scooby-Doo" screenwriter and longtime Team Troma protégé ("Tromeo and Juliet"), sets the action in Bassett, S.C., a tacky, torpid little backwater with a profanity-spewing mayor (Don Thompson) and enough barflies to go around. Ripe for the picking, in other words.

The town's delicate sociological balance starts to unravel when local yokel Grant Grant (Michael Rooker) returns home one evening from a quasi-adulterous romp in the forest, infested with an extra-terrestrial insect that rips through his torso and takes control of his brain (shades of the 1987 Kyle MacLachlan action film "The Hidden").

Unbeknownst to his pretty schoolteacher wife, Starla (Elizabeth Banks from "The 40-Year-Old Virgin"), Grant develops a voracious appetite for meat products and begins a not-so-subtle physical transformation that will culminate in a pair of reproductive tendrils that snake out of chest, anime-style, to pump unsuspecting victims with his alien seed and make them, in the words of one revolted townsman, "all womby."

Soon, Grant's pink wormish offspring have blanketed the town, turning the townsfolk into zombies and forcing Starla to take refuge with hunky young police chief Bill Pardy (Nathan Fillion from "Firefly"). Gunn's spot-on script makes for a satisfying jujitsu of tension and humor, creating scene after scene of creepy, up-your-pant-leg thrills.

REVIEW

'Slither'

Nathan Fillion, Elizabeth Banks,
Michael Rooker
R, 100 minutes

GRADE: B+

'Slither' gets under your skin

■ Slug-infested horror flick is just campy enough to captivate the audience

By Randy Myers
TIMES STAFF WRITER

OCCASIONALLY, all you really need is a flesh-eating alien slug movie to chase away the blues.

"Slither" is that and then some, a hysterically funny and always revolting spoof from the twisted mind of a creature feature fan.

Anyone with delicate sensitivities should steer 9,869 miles away from it, since "Slither" rejoices in giving us close-ups of gooey creepy-crawlies burrowing into mouths of Southern hillbillies.

Certainly, that's not everyone's cup of cinematic tea. But for lovers of alien invader flicks like "Alien" or "Invasion of the Body Snatchers," this one's for you. This here's your "Scream."

Jamie Gunn, scribe of the shockingly good "Dawn of the Dead" remake, admirably performs double-duty as writer and director for this squirm-inducing monster hoedown. He possesses not only the right go-for-broke attitude but has the campy sensibilities to successfully pull off this kind of trash. He does have horror cred, having penned the cult classic "Tromeo and Juliet" for B-movie studio Troma.

As often is the case in movies of this ilk, the story is superfluous, a means at getting at the clever one-liners and over-the-top carnage and chase sequences. But there are many clever bits, including a little zombie serenading to the tune of an Air Supply song. How could anyone resist that? The bloodbath begins when a tiny meteorite crashes into the woods and later shot-puts a totalitarian worm into the brain of a brawny meathead named Grant (a creepy Michael Rooker).

The slug kingpin commands Grant to eat rib eyes, pets and livestock and then orders him to chain up the town tramp in a barn and fatten her up until she approximates the size of a hot-air

REVIEW



- **WHAT:** "Slither"
- **STARRING:** Nathan Fillion, Elizabeth Banks, Gregg Henry, Michael Rooker
- **RATING:** R (strong horror violence and gore, and language)
- **RUNNING TIME:** 1 hour, 35 minutes
- **WHERE:** Opens today at area theaters
- **GRADE:** B

balloon. She eventually explodes, spewing forth an army of slurpy-sounding slug-wormy things that head out on a military maneuver to take over the dimwitted brains of the townsfolk.

Determined to stop the slug ringleader as well as save their skins are the most attractive town members, newly appointed sheriff Bill Pardy (Nathan Fillion of "Serenity") and Grant's teacher wife Starla (Elizabeth Banks of "Seabiscuit"). The two happen to be high-school sweethearts, and Bill still holds out hope. But Starla remains a stand-by-your-mutant type of woman.

Other survivors and potential slug meat include the town's sleazy mayor (Gregg Henry) and a bored teenager (Jenna Fischer), who takes a soak in a bathtub that will make you fidget and shudder.

Yes, "Slither" is silly and sick. But that's kind of what you want out of an alien slug movie.

Randy Myers is the Times movie critic. Reach him at 925-977-8419 or at rmyers@cctimes.com.

Night of the slime fighters

By DAVID GERMAIN
The Associated Press

In a world of brain-dead horror remakes, writer-director James Gunn didn't just set out to redo any old fright flick. In the body-snatchers-from-space tale *Slither*, he aimed to remake



Banks

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They're so benumbed by the snail's pace of their town that they never notice the fiery flash behind them as the meteor crashes in the woods.

Things quickly speed

REVIEW

Slither

B

Rated R—Strong horror violence and gore, and language

Running time: 100, 35 minutes

The verdict: A clever, maniacally paced twist on B-movie slimefests

up, though, as lunk-headed businessman Grant Grant (Michael Rooker) stumbles on the meteorite and the giant, oozy slug that crawls out of it. Grant becomes host for a parasite that prompts him to hilariously — and gruesomely — stockpile raw meat and the carcasses of pets in his basement.

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Now showing at area theaters.

SLITHER
 DAILY GAZETTE (ALBANY)
 DAILY CIRCULATION: 51,805
 SUNDAY CIRCULATION: 54,428
 3/31/08
 PAGE 1 OF 1
 WIRE REVIEW
 GRADE: POSITIVE (STARS N/A)

Director Gunn has fun with satirical 'Slither'

BY DAVID GERMAIN *The Associated Press*

In a world of brain-dead horror remakes, writer-director James Gunn didn't just set out to redo any old fright flick. In the bodysnatchers-from-space tale "Slither," he aimed to remake them all — and more.

With the gore-minded glee of a fan attuned to every cinematic scare tactic, Gunn also knows how silly they are, infusing "Slither" with a wicked sense of parody while still crafting a clever, maniacally paced twist on B-movie slimefests.

The first-time director also has assembled a far finer cast than the genre typically presents, led by Nathan Fillion of the cult TV series "Firefly" and its big-screen spinoff "Serenity."

As Bill Pardy, the police chief in a hillbilly town overrun by killer slugs and flesh-munching zombies, Fillion expands on the droll flair he mastered as skipper of the rickety spaceship Serenity.

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SETTING STAGE

Gunn nicely establishes the story in a quick opening segment as a meteor hurtles toward Earth. Cut to the Southern burg of Wheezy, where a bored Pardy and a deputy fritter away time in a patrol car by checking the speed of a whippoorwill with their radar gun.

They're so benumbed by the snail's pace of their town that they never notice the fiery flash behind them as the meteor crashes in the woods. Things quickly speed up though, as lunk-headed businessman Grant Grant (Michael Rooker) stumbles on the meteorite and the giant slug that crawls out of it. Grant becomes host for a parasite that prompts him to hilariously — and gruesomely — stockpile raw meat and the carcasses of neighborhood pets in his basement.

He's also gradually transformed into a freakish, tentacled predator who unleashes hordes of slimy worms that turn the townsfolk into meat-hungry zombies.

Pardy and Grant's wife, Starla (Elizabeth Banks), with whom the police chief shares an unrequited romantic history, race through a rip-roaring night of the living dead as they try to put down Grant and his zombie army.

The grisly creature effects and themes of parasitic possession pay respect to "The Thing," "Invasion of the Body Snatchers," the "Alien" franchise, the George Romero zombie flicks and countless other creature features.

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Hollywood has hit on a dependable little gold mine churning out shoddy horror remakes. Here's hoping someone like Gunn, who has true creative vision, can find the same commercial success.

'Slither' has soul-sucking slugs

It seems as if the director
has recycled parts of
different movies.

By Stephen Whitty
Newhouse News Service

The monster in "Slither" is a huge, spongy sort of creature that sucks up everything around it and incorporates it into its own ever-growing body.

Sort of like the movie itself. Look carefully, and you'll see a lot of John Carpenter's "The Thing" here. A bit of David Cronenberg's "They Came From Within," too. And the monster's face — is that a tribute to the vestigial twin of Frank Henenlotter's "Basket Case" or the pineal fiend from Stuart Gordon's "From Beyond"?

This sort of constant borrowing is common to modern horror movies, which steal ideas from the classics when they're not re-making them entirely. The director of "Slither," James Gunn, has even done it himself — he's the one who rewrote "Dawn of the Dead" and got credit for "re-imagining" it.

In "Slither," though, he's recycled parts of different movies to make a whole new one.

It's all still fondly familiar, though. If heroine Elizabeth Banks had bigger hair, or there were a few power ballads on the

and a few good jokes

soundtrack, you could almost swear you were watching one of those early '80s horrors. Lots of gore and quite a few laughs.

Luckily they're all intentional.

The movie is set in a small town of rednecks and blue-collar, where one night a meteor crashes in the woods, and a slimy life-form oozes out. Poor Michael Rooker, out for a stroll, decides to poke it with a stick.

You can predict some of what happens next. Rooker gets infected by a nasty slug that tunnels up into his brain. Before too long the neighborhood pets are disappearing. Then the neighbors start to follow — and Grant

starts sprouting more tentacles than a fried calamari appetizer.

What's surprising, though, is with what good humor all this is done. Some of Gunn's script is baldly expository, and a few of his in-jokes manage to be obvious and obscure.

Gunn's direction is assured, and if his exploitation skills are a little one-sided he gets good performances from his cast. Banks makes a plucky heroine and Nathan Fillion is a good stalwart hero. The best role goes to Gregg Henry as the foul-mouthed mayor desperate to win re-election.

Too bad slugs don't vote.

Top Gunn

"Slither" oozes with style from first-time director

By [unclear]
[unclear]
[unclear]

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'Slither' elevates standard for horror

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The pace quickens, though, as lunkheaded businessman Grant Grant (Michael Rooker) stumbles on the meteorite and the giant, oozy slug that crawls out of it. Grant becomes host for a parasite that prompts him to stockpile raw meat and the carcasses of neighborhood pets in his basement. He's gradually transformed into a freakish, tentacled predator whose activities unleash hordes of slimy worms that turn the townsfolk into meat-hungry zombies.

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-- David Germain, Associated Press



Kylie Struikwyer (Mania Saulnier) takes a relaxing bath with an unexpected slug visitor in *Slither*, a genre-bending horror film by director James Gunn.

'Slither' sneaks up and slugs horror genre with clever spoofs

BY DAVID GERMAIN
Associated Press

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SLITHER

NOW PLAYING: Bellvue 12, Green Hills 16, History 8, Hollywood 27, Indian Lake 10, Cary Mills 20, Rivergate 8, Roxy 8 (Dickson), Roxy 10 (Lebanon), Thoroughbred 20, Wynnsong 16

RATED: R, for strong horror violence and gore, and language. 1 hour, 36 minutes.

Gunn neatly establishes the story in a quick-opening segment as a meteor hurtles toward Earth. Cut to the Southern burgh of Wheelsy, where a bored Pardy and a deputy fitter away time in a patrol car by checking the speed of a whippoorwill with their taser gun.

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Hollywood has hit on a dependable little gold mine churning out shoddy horror remakes and other bad scary movies. Here's hoping someone like Gunn, who has a truly creative vision for the genre, can find the same commercial success. ■

Amusing 'Slither' worth poking with a stick

Friday, March 31, 2006

By Stephen Whitty

Newhouse News Service

The monster in "Slither" is a huge, spongy sort of creature that sucks up everything around it, and incorporates it into its own ever-growing body.

Sort of like the movie itself.

Look carefully and you'll see a lot of John Carpenter's "The Thing" here. A bit of David Cronenberg's "They Came From Within," too. And the monster's face -- is that a tribute to the vestigial twin of Frank Henenlotter's "Basket Case" or the pineal fiend from Stuart Gordon's "From Beyond"?

I don't know, but it's creeping up your shoulder right now.

This sort of constant borrowing is common to modern horror movies, which steal ideas from the classics when they're not remaking them entirely. The director of "Slither," James Gunn, has even done it himself -- he's the one who rewrote George Romero's "Dawn of the Dead" and got credit for "re-imagining" it.

In "Slither," though, he's recycled parts of different movies to make a whole new one.

It's all still fondly familiar, though. If heroine Elizabeth Banks had bigger hair, or there were a few power ballads on the soundtrack, you could almost swear you were watching one of those early '80s horrors that outfits such as Vestron or Concorde used to put out. Lots of goo, lots of gore and quite a few laughs.

Luckily, in this case, they're all intentional.

The movie is set in a small town of rednecks and blue-collar workers, where one night a meteor crashes in the woods and a slimy life-form oozes out. Poor Michael Rooker, out for a stroll, decides to poke it with a stick.

And that's where all the trouble starts.

You can predict some of what happens next. Rooker gets infected by a nasty slug that tunnels up into his brain, giving him the munchies and some desperate mood swings. Before too long the neighborhood pets are disappearing. Then the neighbors start to follow -- and Grant starts sprouting more tentacles than a fried calamari appetizer.

What's surprising, though, is the good humor of all this. There are a lot of soul-sucking slugs, an army of flesh-eating zombies, a few good profane jokes and a small crew of heroes with pump shotguns.

And for any red-meat horror fan, that's quite enough.

(STAR)(STAR)(STAR)

'Slither' a gore-filled but clever parody

BY DAVID GERMAIN
The Associated Press

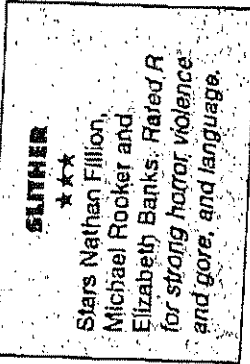
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REVIEW

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A Welcome Slug

The slimy antics of 'Slither' herald a director to watch

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SOMETHING ICKY THIS WAY COMES: "Slither" sends up B-movie slimefests.

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DAVID GERMAIN (AP)



Ready for slime time

Gunn's 'Slither' a wicked and enjoyably silly gorefest

By David Germain

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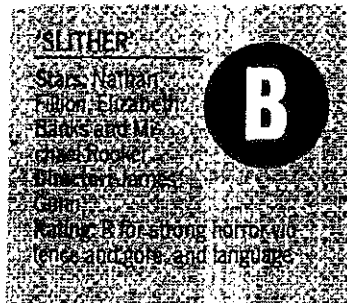
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SLITHER

THE EXAMINER/WEEKEND

DAILY CIRC: 145,000

SUNDAY CIRC: 156,470

3/31/06

PAGE 2 OF 2

Review: Positive (Grade: B)



A wife (center, Elizabeth Banks) and two local cops (Nathan Fillion and Don Thompson) confront the woman's mutated husband in "Slither." -Universal photo

Slither
 The Courier-Journal
 Daily Circ: 227,467
 Sunday Circ: 283,507
 3/31/06

Page 1 of 1
 Color Photo
 Review

First-timer gets horror parody 'Slither' wickedly right

By David Berman
 Associated Press

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Gunn, who wrote the screenplay for the 2004 remake "Dawn of the Dead," has assembled a far finer cast than the genre typically presents, led by Nathan Fillion and its spinoff, "Serenity."

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Starla Grant (Elizabeth Banks) dials 911 while her husband Grant (Michael Rooker) watches in "Slither."

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MOVIE REVIEW

'Slither'

Starring: Nathan Fillion, Elizabeth Banks, Michael Rooker

C-J Rating:

★ ★ ★

MPAA Rating:

R. Strong horror violence and gore, profanity

Showing: Dixie,

Great Escape 16,

Shelbyville,

Green Tree 10,

Showcase 16,

Showcase Story-

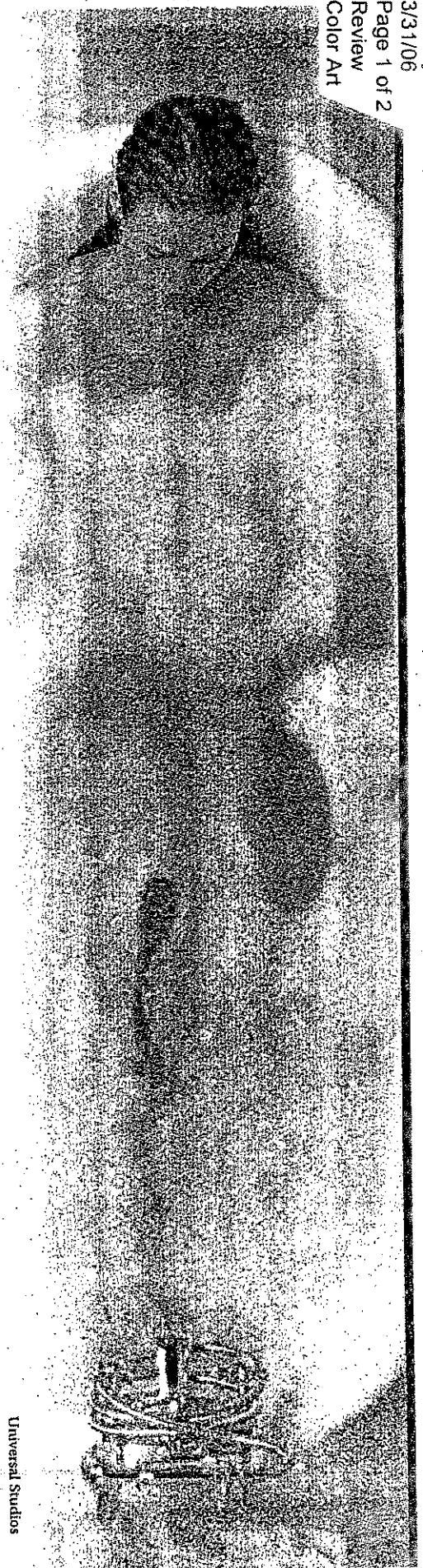
brook, Tinseltown. (1.36)

Write your own

review: courier-

journal.com/

reviews



Kylie (Tania Saulnier) should have seen enough scary movies to know this rule: the fewer the clothes, the more the aliens attack.

Universal Studios

REVIEW

'Slither' ★★★

Who's in it? Nathan Fillion, Michael Rooker, Elizabeth Banks, Tania Saulnier

Did you know? Director James Gunn is married to Jenna Fisher, who plays Pam on "The Office." She has a cameo as a police dispatcher.

Rated: R for strong horror violence and gore, and language
Running time: 1 hour 37 minutes

What did you think? Call (816) 234-4244 or e-mail review@kcstar.com

See the trailer on [PreviewExtra at KansasCity.com](http://PreviewExtra.com). Click on Entertainment.

Ode to horror films slithers with wit and slime

By DAVID GERMAIN
The Associated Press

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See SLITHER, E-5

SLITTER: Movie references ooze from the screen

Continued from F-3

neighborhood pet in his basement. He's also gradually transformed into a tentacle predator whose activities unleash hordes of slimy worms that turn the townsfolk into meat-fungy zombies.

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When the alien infestation threatens to undermine Wheelsey's annual deer-hunting festival, the mayor (Gregg Henry in an outrageously over-the-top comic performance) callously hopes to salvage the event, a la the mayor in "Jaws" who hoped to save his island's tourist season despite the killer shark.

A close encounter with one of the alien parasites gives a spunky teenager (Tiana Santoler) extraterrestrial insight, allowing her to explicate the creatures' nature and

purpose the way Bill Pullman did in "Independence Day."

And a scene where zombies do "A Streetcar Named Desire," coming after one of the characters while uttering her name instead of Marlon Brando's "Stella," is just priceless.

Hollywood has hit on a dependable little gold mine churning out shoddy horror remakes and other bad scary movies. Here's hoping someone like Gunn, who has a truly creative vision for the genre, can find the same commercial success.

Goopy 'Slither' infested with spirit of '80s splatter comedies

By JEFF PIZKE
Daily Herald Staff Writer

Slither
★★★
outlets
Opens today

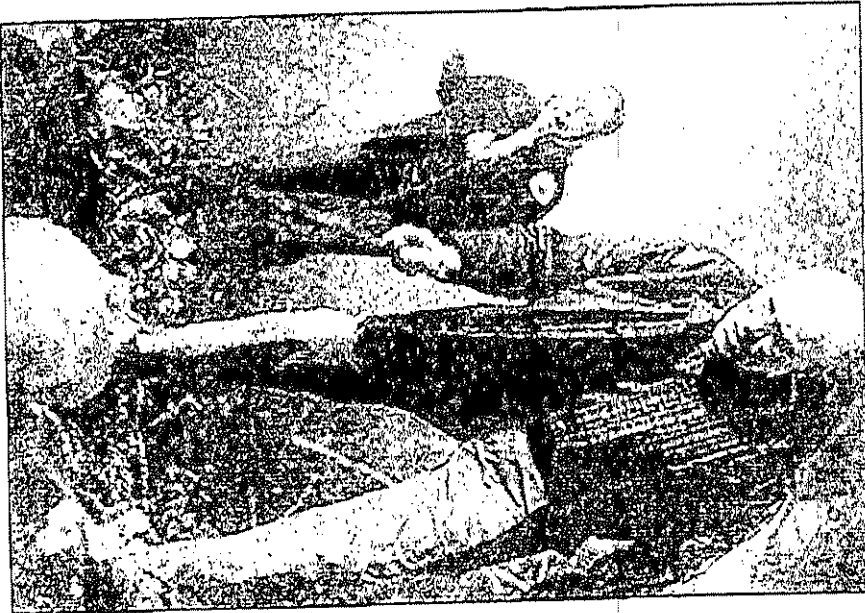
Starring
Nathan Fillion
Elizabeth Banks
Gregg Henry
Michael Rooker
Vida Verónica James, Tonia Saulnier and
Jenna Fischer
Written and directed by James Gunn
Produced by Paul Brooks and Eric
Newman. **Universal Pictures** release.
Rated R (strong horror violence, gore
and language). **Running time:** 96
minutes.

"Slither" is the sort of spook show that thrived during the 1980s after years of rote slasher dross. Back then, flicks such as "Evil Dead II," "Critters" and "The Shuff" used humor to get a reaction from jaded audiences. Now that the '80s have returned — from a Republican in the White House to dance-punk bands wearing skinny ties — it's time for the classic splatter comedy to make its comeback.

Thankfully, writer/director James Gunn gets it. He's best known as an alumnus of Trioma Studios ("Tromeo and Juliet") and for writing 2004's "Dawn of the Dead" remake. "Slither" is his directorial debut, and it's hard to imagine a better man to tell the tale of a small town overrun by slimy, mind-controlling alien slugs.

It's even harder to imagine a better-lead than Nathan Fillion, a major cult star after his winning role as cavalier Capt. Mal Reynolds in Joss Whedon's "Firefly" and "Serenity." Here, he's Bill Pardy, police chief of rural Wheezy, S.C., a town so sleepy that the cops don't notice a meteor crashing right behind their car.

Another genre favorite, Michael Rooker of "Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer" fame, is businessman Grant Grant, who scooped up pretty young Starla (Elizabeth Banks, the blonde nympho from "The 40 Year-Old Virgin") as a teenager. Bill Pardy's mad hots for Starla from childhood, but he's resigned to the fact that she chose the rich, old guy.



Brenda
(Brenda James) and Grant Grant (Michael Rooker) discover an alien pod in the horror-comedy "Slither."

One night, when Starla's interest in nookie wanes, Grant gets drunk and meets an old girlfriend's sister, Brenda (Brenda James). They're walking in the woods when they come across the meteor, which hosts a worm-like creature that shoots into Grant's chest and burrows its way up to his brain.

Of course, it's an evil alien seeking to wipe out life on Earth. It causes Grant to stockpile raw meat, slaughter local house pets for food and kidnap Brenda, turning her into a huge, swollen breeding sac for the alien's progeny. By the time Starla realizes what's up, her husband's chest is a nasty mess of sores and tentacles, and she teams with Bill to find the missing Brenda.

They find her, but it's too late. In one of the film's many

impressive gross-out scenes, Bill, his creepy fellow cops and Starla witness the culmination of Brenda's incubation: She explodes into a torrent of alien slugs, which swarm over the heroes looking for a way into their bodies.

It's a CG spectacle that brings to mind both Jeff Lieberman's killer worm classic "Squirm" and David Cronenberg's biologically barrowing debut "Shivers." (The latter film's infamous parasite-in-the-bathroom sequence is referenced in "Slither," featuring prominently in the ads.)

The slugs take over Wheelzy person by person, entering through their mouths and connecting them to the master

brain residing in Grant Bill and Starla assemble uninfected fighters including hilariously inept mayor Jack MacReady (Gregg Henry) and cranky teen Kyle (Tania Saulnier), who fend off an invader with her long, ghetto-fabulous nails.

The ick factor is commendably high, with a host of great special effects (both digital and prosthetic), including Grant's elaborate mutation, a head blown open and a guy butterfied like a shrimp. Yet Gunn's droll dialogue and game actors give "Slither" the proper tone: fun but not mockingly campy. Pillions laid-back wit is perfect for what could be a stock heroic role, while Henry steals a number of scenes as the foul-mouthed mayor. Look for Gunn in a cameo, as well as his wife, Jenna Fischer of NBC's "The Office," as the riotously deadpan police dispatcher.

But "Slither" belongs to Rooker, who projects a surprising humanity under the latex as a guy who really loves his "trophy" wife, yet cannot help but watch as she slips away. He gives it an emotional core, one you don't expect from a movie with this much goop and which promises that in the future, Gunn might deliver his own genuine genre classic.

Want to write your own review of this movie? Go to www.dailyherald.com/ta/ta/taout

SLITHER
HARTFORD COURANT
DAILY CIRC: 175,000
PAGE: 1 OF 2 DATE: 3/31/06
Review
Grade: 4 out of 5 Stars/ Positive

Slimy Spoof Nails Horror Film Clichés

■ **'Slither'** ★★★★★

March 31, 2006

By DAVID GERMAIN, Associated Press

In a world of brain-dead horror remakes, writer-director James Gunn didn't just set out to redo any old fright flick. In the body-snatchers-from-space tale "Slither," he aimed to remake them all and more.

With the gore-minded glee of a fan attuned to every cinematic scare tactic, Gunn also knows how silly they are, infusing "Slither" with a wicked sense of parody while still crafting a clever, maniacally paced twist on B-movie slime fests.

The first-time director, who wrote the screenplay for the 2004 remake "Dawn of the Dead," also has assembled a far finer cast than the genre typically presents, led by Nathan Fillion of the cult TV series "Firefly" and its big-screen spinoff "Serenity."

As Bill Pardy, the police chief in a hillbilly town overrun by killer slugs and flesh-munching zombies, Fillion expands on the droll flair he mastered as skipper of the rickety spaceship Serenity.

"Slither" also lets Fillion cut loose and get really goofy, all the while maintaining his boyish rogue's charm. This guy deserves to be a major star.

Gunn nicely establishes the story in a quick opening segment as a meteor hurtles toward Earth. Cut to the Southern burgh of Wheelsey, where a bored Pardy and a deputy fritter away time in a patrol car by checking the speed of a whippoorwill with their radar gun.

They're so benumbed by the snail's pace of their town that they never notice the fiery flash behind them as the meteor crashes in the woods.

Things quickly speed up, though, as lunk-headed businessman Grant Grant (Michael Rooker) stumbles on the meteorite and the giant, oozy slug that crawls out of it. Grant becomes host for a parasite that prompts him to hilariously and gruesomely stockpile raw meat and the carcasses of neighborhood pets in his basement.

He's also gradually transformed into a freakish, tentacled predator whose activities unleash hordes of slimy worms that turn the townsfolk into meat-hungry zombies.

Pardy and Grant's wife, Starla (Elizabeth Banks), with whom the police chief shares an unrequited romantic history, race through a rip-roaring night of the living dead as they try to put down Grant and his zombie army.

The grisly creature effects and themes of parasitic possession pay respect to "The Thing," "Invasion of the Body Snatchers," the "Alien" franchise, the George Romero zombie flicks and countless other creature features.

Gunn revels in the absurdities of horror conventions but also clearly loves them. He's a real student of the stuff, piling on moments that embrace and spoof not only fright films but other movies.

Hollywood has hit on a dependable little gold mine churning out shoddy horror remakes and other bad scary movies. Here's hoping someone like Gunn, who has a truly creative vision for the genre,

SLITHER
HARTFORD COURANT
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Grade: 4 out of 5 Stars/ Positive

can find the same commercial success.

SLITHER is a Universal Pictures release, written and directed by James Gunn. Running time: 96 minutes. Rated R for strong horror violence and gore, and language. Opening today at area theaters.

SLITHER

PORTLAND OREGONIAN

Daily Circ: 604,600

Sunday Circ: 747,600

Date: 3/31/06

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Color PHOTO

Movies | The new thriller about an alien slug invasion, rehashes genre classics to fine effect

By **STEPHEN WHITTY**
NEWHOUSE NEWS SERVICE

The monster in "Slither" is a huge, spongy sort of creature that sucks up everything around it, and incorporates it into its own ever-growing body.

Sort of like the movie itself.

Look carefully and you'll see a lot of John Carpenter's "The Thing" here. A bit of David Cronenberg's "They Came From Within," too. And the monster's face — is that a tribute to the vestigial twin of Frank Henenlotter's "Basket Case" or the pineal fiend from Stuart Gordon's "From Beyond"?

I don't know, but it's creeping up your shoulder right now.

This sort of constant borrowing is common to modern horror movies, which steal ideas from the classics when they're not remaking them entirely. The director of "Slither," James Gunn, has even done it himself — he's the one who rewrote George Romero's "Dawn of the Dead" and got fulsome credit for "re-imagining" it.

In "Slither," though, he's recycled parts of different movies to make a whole new one.

It's all still fondly familiar, though. If heroine Elizabeth Banks



UNIVERSAL PICTURES

Starla Grant (Elizabeth Banks, left), Police Chief Bill Pardy (Nathan Fillion, center) and officer Wally Whale (Don Thompson) cautiously approach a gruesome creature in the new movie "Slither."

Slither**Grade:** B-**Cast and crew:** Elizabeth Banks, Nathan Fillion, Michael Rooker, Gregg Henry; directed by James Gunn**Rated:** R for extreme gore, violence, strong language and sexual situations**Running time:** 96 minutes**The lowdown:** An alien plague consumes a small town, turning residents into mutant monsters

had bigger hair, or there were a few power ballads on the soundtrack, you could almost swear you were watching one of those early 1980s

horror that outfits like Vestron or Concorde used to put out. Lots of goo, lots of gore and quite a few laughs.

Luckily, in this case, they're all intentional.

The movie is set in a small town of rednecks and blue-collars, where one night a meteor crashes in the woods, and a slimy life-form oozes out. Poor Michael Rooker, out for a stroll — and innocent, apparently, of ever having seen "The Blob," even the lousy one with Matt Dillon's brother — decides to poke it with a stick.

And that's where all the trouble starts.

You can predict some of what happens next. Rooker gets infected by a nasty slug that tunnels up into

SLITHER

PORTLAND OREGONIAN

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Sunday Circ: 747,600

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his brain, giving him the munchies and some desperate mood swings. Before too long the neighborhood pets are disappearing. Then the neighbors start to follow — and Rooker starts sprouting more tentacles than a fried calamari appetizer.

What's surprising, though, is with what good humor all this is done. Some of Gunn's script is baldly expository, and a few of his in-jokes manage to be both obvious and obscure at the same time.

Yet Gunn's direction is assured, and if his exploitation skills are a

little one-sided — there's far more gratuitous violence than sex here — he gets good performances from his cast. Bariks, last seen as the dangerously hot blonde of "The 40-Year-Old Virgin," makes a properly plucky heroine and Nathan Fillion is a good stalwart hero. The best role goes to Gregg Henry — the driller-killer of De Palma's "Body Double" — as the foul-mouthed mayor desperate to win re-election.

Too bad slugs don't vote.

I don't want to overestimate "Slither" — it's strictly a fun B-

movie horror, on the order of "Tremors," that somehow got released by a major studio. There's none of the delicately ghastly poetry here that recent Japanese horror films have provided (and, thankfully, none of the genuine sadism in recent American shockers like "The Hills Have Eyes" or "Hostel"). Instead there are just a lot of soul-sucking slugs, an army of flesh-eating zombies, a few good profane jokes and a small crew of heroes with pump shotguns.

And for any red-meat horror fan, that's quite enough.

'Slither': A slimey, fiendishly good time

Friday, March 31, 2006

By WINDA BENEDETTI
SPECIAL TO THE P-I

One might think that a film featuring slug-birthing, slime-spewing, semisquid zombie mutants wouldn't stand much of a chance with the critics. And yet here it is: "Slither" is a funny, freaky, fiendishly good flick that might just find a following beyond the standard cadre of horror fanatics.

Written and directed by James Gunn -- the guy who wrote the 2004 "Dawn of the Dead" remake - "Slither" takes us to the hick town of Wheeely, S.C., where man's precarious dominance over the planet is challenged when an alien-infested comet crashes in the forest.

As the extraterrestrial infection quickly spreads, the townsfolk turn into the aforementioned slug-birthing, slime-spewing, semisquid zombie mutants, and a likable-if-oddball cast of characters suddenly finds themselves charged with saving themselves, their town and the entire planet.

Nathan Fillion (star of "Firefly" and "Serenity") plays Police Chief Bill Pardy, a hometown boy with otherworldly troubles and an unrequited love. Elizabeth Banks ("Spiderman," "The 40-Year-Old Virgin") plays Starla Grant, a woman who finds her reverence for the sacred bonds of marriage put to the ultimate test. Michael Rooker ("Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer") plays Grant Grant, Starla's

MOVIE REVIEW

SLITHER

DIRECTOR: James Gunn

CAST: Nathan Fillion, Elizabeth Banks, Michael Rooker, Gregg Henry

RUNNING TIME: 96 minutes

RATING: R for strong horror violence and gore, and language

GRADE: B

husband and a man metamorphosing into something that looks like the inbred step-cousin to Jabba the Hut.

Here, Fillion is ever the excellent leading man, tossing off wry one-liners with the kind of easygoing charm that made him a hit in the space western "Serenity." If there's any justice in this world, he'll find himself a big-screen fave in the future.

Meanwhile, Rooker does an admirable job giving a heart to the hideous man-beast who may find himself compelled to eat the neighbors' dogs but still deeply loves his beautiful wife. (You'll never listen to the Air Supply song "Every Woman in the World" the same way again.)

Killer slugs, squidlike mutants, goo-spewing zombies -- the monster factor here is so multifaceted it's hard to keep track of who's turning into what and why. Still, this is Gunn's first time directing a feature and he deserves kudos for giving us a fast-paced film that delivers yucks and yelps as it both celebrates and sends up the horror genre he so clearly loves.

And a last note to serious film fans: Wait until all the credits have rolled for a final bit of slithery fun.

Winda Benedetti is a Seattle-based freelance writer who can be reached at Goodgirlfriday@gmail.com.

Humor creeps into slimy 'Slither'

Surprising characters give weight to flick headed for a 'slugfest'

By Robert Denerstein, Rocky Mountain News
March 31, 2006

Here are some of the folks who shouldn't bother to see *Slither*, a supremely gross and often-funny horror film about an invasion of slugs from the depths of space:

- Anyone who insists that movies follow a totally logical course
- Anyone who despises movies that seem to have been assembled from ingredients already seen in other movies
- Those who don't like sickening sights, say a man being split in half and glancing downward in shock as his innards run out of him

OK, forewarned is forearmed.

Now, for the rest of you sleaze merchants, here's the skinny: *Slither* may not be a comic classic and it does have a kind of low-rent, spare-parts quality, but director James Gunn - who has obviously watched *Night of the Living Dead* - throws the movie's ingredients together at a high enough velocity to create new interest.

Moreover, the humor (though not surefire in every instance) helps make the movie more enjoyable, especially if you like to watch crawling, blood-red slugs climb all over everything or if the thought of giant tentacles springing from the chest of slithering creatures quickens your pulse.

The creatures penetrate the stomachs of their victims, some of whom swell to the size of balloons in a Thanksgiving parade. The sight of an afflicted teenage girl (Brenda James) is something to behold, a veritable big-screen behemoth.

And if you like slime, *Slither* will push you down the slippery slope to big-screen pleasure. You also probably won't be surprised to learn that Gunn has plied his trade at Troma Entertainment, a company that specializes in off-the wall horror with a drive-in flavor.

The movie begins when Grant Grant (Michael Rooker) is overtaken by aliens, much to the dismay of his pretty young wife (Elizabeth Banks). The local police chief (Nathan Fillion) finds himself tossed into the middle of the proceedings. He has a crush on Banks' character, and he must fight the alien invaders.

After the creatures take over Grant's body, he begins to change. He swells to giant size, grows a set of crooked but razor-sharp teeth and begins shooting tentacles all over the place while oozing buckets of slime.

He's Jabba the Hutt with a skin disorder, and you'd do well not to let him near the family pets.

Gunn engineers the movie so that it builds toward many fully exploitative moments, and he includes characters - the loudmouthed local mayor (Gregg Henry) - who provide comic relief. Fillion's character adds occasional ironic asides that should keep anyone from taking things too seriously, even as the horrors multiply to include zombies who munch on human flesh.

No point dwelling on any of this. *Slither* is a goof on B-movies, but it contains enough jolts to give you the jitters. And for pure revolting gross-outs, it's the best film to come along in quite some time. It may even make you sick. For the movie's intended audience, that's a good thing.

DENVER ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

Daily Circ: 350,000

Saturday Circ: 750,000

Date: 3/31/06

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Slither

Our Rating

B

Rated: R

Rated Reason: for strong brutal violence, pervasive language, some drug content and sexuality/nudity

Director: James Gunn

Producer: Eric Newman, Paul Brooks

Cast: Nathan Fillion, Elizabeth Banks, Michael Rooker, Gregg Henry, Tania Saulnier

Writer: James Gunn

Time: 1:36

Genre: SciFi/Fantasy

'Slither' injects life into zombie genre

By Carla Meyer -- Bee Movie Critic - (Published March 31, 2006)

"Slither" redefines the term "gross-out comedy." Tongue-in-cheek yet seriously disgusting, this zombie film isn't perfect. But it is memorable, which can't be said for most of today's assembly-line horror films.

The brilliant 2004 film "Shaun of the Dead" set a lofty standard for the growing sub-subgenre of zombie comedy. It's obvious from the first frames of "Slither" that writer and director James Gunn isn't aiming that high. A veteran of the Troma exploitation house and screenwriter of the 2004 "Dawn of the Dead" remake, Gunn is merely seeking to spiff up C-grade horror films. But not too much.

The hillbilly accents and "Deliverance"-like facial features of some characters help set the tone (the film was shot in the Appalachian hamlet of Vancouver, British Columbia). There's an intriguing sense of things being slightly amiss in the fictional town of Wheezy, even before an alien force infects people and turns them into zombies. Shots of Main Street show a priest smoking a cigarette and the mayor (Gregg Henry) spouting language quite inappropriate for a top city official.

A pretty teacher named Starla (Elizabeth Banks) tries to shape Wheezy's young minds, but the boys in her class are too focused on her shape to listen. The town's police chief (Nathan Fillion) has been in love with Starla since they were kids, but she's committed to her wealthy older husband, Grant Grant (Michael Rooker).

Fillion, from "Serenity" and the TV series "Firefly," and Banks, from "The 40-Year-Old Virgin," are appealing young actors on the verge of stardom. They are likely to stay on the verge, since "Slither" is too gory for most tastes. But they give admirably committed performances. The real standout, though, is Rooker, lending lots of new dimensions to a character experiencing a midlife crisis messier than most.

Rebuffed in his marital bed by a curlers-wearing Starla, Grant repairs to a bar where a female patron sings the theme song from "The Crying Game" in an intense bout of karaoke. Grant and a local floozy (Brenda James) head to the forest and encounter the remnants of a meteor on the ground. In a sign of the general goopiness and fairly obvious special effects to come, a gelatinous object spits something into Grant's stomach.

A veteran character actor with the looks of an aging prizefighter, Rooker keeps every emotion close to the surface, all the better to impart Grant's strange stomach activity and newfound hunger for raw meat. When Starla wants to get romantic, Rooker's pained expression shows how much Grant wants to keep it

SACRAMENTO BEE

Daily Circ: 290,553

Sunday Circ: 332,069

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together, because, beneath the scabby rash spreading across his body, he really loves this lady.

That love provides a thread to reality as Grant undergoes a startling physical transformation and moves from consuming pot roasts to live animals. As grotesque as the character gets, Rooker always imparts his humanity.

The laughs can get lost amid explicit horror scenes, but the mayor's foul-mouthed rants provide reliable comic relief. There's also a sense of fun in the exaggerated zombie walks of the infected townspeople. Man, woman and child show a lock-step lust for meat and a collective struggle to keep from cracking up.

The movie's title derives from the movements of tiny creatures that contribute to the general alien-provoked mayhem. During an extended sequence involving these creatures, "Slither" morphs into a top-notch horror film that's truly chilling and suspenseful.

Slither

3 stars

CAST: Elizabeth Banks, Nathan Fillion, Michael Rooker, Brenda James and Gregg Henry

DIRECTOR-WRITER: James Gunn

DISTRIBUTOR: Universal

THEATERS: Century (Folsom, Greenback, Laguna, Stadium), Regal (Auburn, Davis, El Dorado Hills, Natomas), UA Roseville, Sierra Grass Valley

96 minutes

Rated R

SLITHER
BOSTON HERALD
DAILY CIRC: 285,000
SUNDAY CIRC: 165,000
PAGE: 1 OF 2 DATE: 3/31/06
Review
Grade: B+/ Positive

E12 'Slither' oozes with B-movie gore, humor

By JAMES VERNIERE

"My Name Is Earl" meets "Night of the Living Dead" in "Slither." An alien-invasion spoof skewering both red state rednecks and parasitic slugs from outer space, the film is a retro-horror hoot and a genuinely pleasant surprise.

MOVIE REVIEW

"SLITHER"

Rated R. At AMC Boston Common, AMC Fenway and suburban theaters

Grade: B+

Welcome to the dung-kicking

Midwest hamlet of Wheezy, where the mayor (a hilarious Gregg Henry) is a potty-mouthed swinger, the slow-witted deputy clocks the speed of a whippoorwill, beer-soaked line dancers are celebrating the opening — yee-haw — of deer season and a meteor has just landed in the woods.

Soon, the town's cats and dogs go missing and oafish Escalade-driving businessman Grant (Michael Rooker of the cult fave "Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer") is sprouting new and disgusting parts and buying all the meat in town.

Before you can say "Night of the Living Dead Body-Snatching Reanimators Who Came from Within," hunky Sheriff Bill Pardy (Nathan Fillion of "Firefly") is dealing with a massive infestation of alien slugs and a plague of flesh-eating zombies.

Complicating matters, Bill is carrying a torch for Grant's beautiful wife, Starla (Pittsfield's Elizabeth Banks), whose husband is turning into something squidlike and feeding newly butchered cows to a woman (Brenda James) he keeps in a barn.

Writer-director James Gunn,



MEATY ROLES: Starla Grant (Elizabeth Banks) dials 911 while gruesome husband Grant Grant (Michael Rooker) looks on in 'Slither.'

A scene involving a swimming slug and spunky teen taking a bath is as funny as it is unspeakably lewd.

who wrote the script for the 2004 "reimagined" "Dawn of the Dead," is a former employee of the low-budget horror house

of Troma and writer of the unforgettably titled "Tromeo and Juliet." All of which is to say, Gunn knows this territory and respects its traditions.

In fact, "Slither" pays knowing tribute to the B-movie roots of such 1970s and '80s horror-meisters as David Cronenberg (before he turned highbrow), Frank "Basketcase" Henenlotter, Wes Craven, Stuart "Reanimator" Gordon, John Carpenter and, of course, George "Big Daddy" Romero.

Fillion, who looks like Tom Cruise on growth hormone, could be the William Shatner of his era, and I mean that in the best possible way. He's handsome enough to be a leading man and also has a smart, self-effacing flair for comedy.

When Grant, who looks like Jeff Goldblum halfway through "The Fly," tells Starla that his appearance "is just a bee sting," you'll laugh out loud. Recalling "Jaws," the mayor wants to attribute the dead pets to Lyme disease. One local clan won't let being turned into zombies stop it from enjoying "Family Fun Day." A scene involving a swimming slug and spunky teen (Tania Saulnier) taking a bath is as funny as it is unspeakably lewd.

Special effects by Todd Masters ("Tales from the Crypt," "Predator"), including 500 prosthetic slugs, oozing pustules, slimy tentacles and a woman's torso bloated by thousands of alien parasites, are both first-rate and cheesy enough to lovingly recall the low-budget ingenuity of the masters.

If you're curious to know what a comedy requiring 300 gallons of slime might look like, here's the ticket.

SLITHER
BOSTON HERALD
DAILY CIRC: 285,000
SUNDAY CIRC: 165,000
PAGE: 2 OF 2 DATE: 3/31/06
Review
Grade: B+/ Positive

Ewww, slithery red plumber-proof alien slugs ...

By Steven Rea
INQUIRER MOVIE CRITIC

Like *Tremors*, only icier, *Slither* is a tongue-in-cheek horror flick that skewers the genre while delivering seat-squirming scares.

In fact, it's more than tongue-in-cheek. It's slimy-giant-red-slugs-from-outer-space-in-cheek, too.

Film Review

The townsfolk of Wheelsty, a run-down backwater burg headed by a potty-mouthed mayor, have been invaded by foodlong worm-things that have a penchant for inserting themselves into people's mouths.

Once they've been ingested, all heck breaks loose: Think *Alien*, with twin tentacles popping out of chest cavities, spawning more crawling maggot-slugs, and turning the populace into mutant zom-

Slither

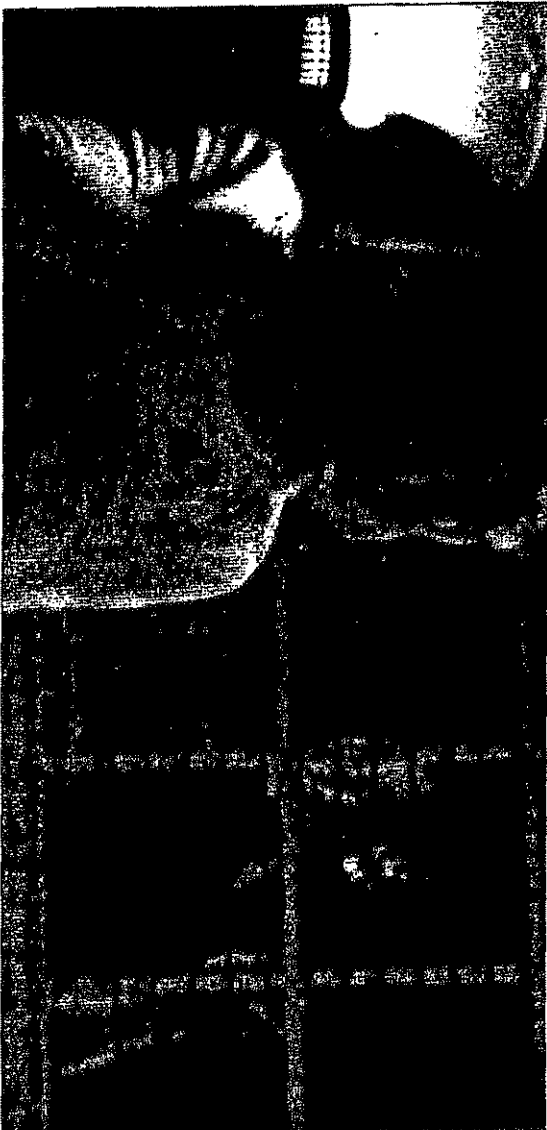
★★★ (out of four stars)

Produced by Paul Brooks, written and directed by James Gunn, photography by Gregory Middleton, music by Tyler Bates, distributed by Universal Pictures.

Running time: 1 hour, 34 mins.
Bill Pardy Nathan Fillion
Starta Grant Elizabeth Banks
Kyle Struemyer Tania Saurnier
Grant Grant Michael Rooker
Parent's guide: R (gore, poop, violence, profanity, sex)
Playing at: area theaters

bies with an insatiable appetite for red meat. Dogs, cats, cows, possum, deer, humans — look out!

The twisted brainchild of James Gunn, *Slither* is a fun, gory, and often hilarious look at the twisted brainchild of James Gunn. See **SLITHER** on W9



Chris Helcermanas
He's just not the man she married: Petrified Starta Grant (Elizabeth Banks) dials 911 as gruesome Grant Grant (Michael Rooker), her businessman husband, peeks in in "Slither," a fond homage of a horror flick.

SLITHER
PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER
CIRC: 383,000
SUNDAY CIRC: 900,000
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Review (Positive) — 3 Stars of 4
B / W Photo

... Sounds like fun!

SLITHER from WS

Gunn, a guy who has written books, gofered at Thoma Entertainment (he also wrote the shock houses' hit *Throne & Jailer*), and directed the 2004 *Dawn of the Dead* remake, *Slither* stars Elizabeth Banks as Starla Grant, the wholesome young wife of one of Wheelsy's wealthier businessmen, Grant Grant (Michael Rooker).

While the marriage isn't founded on any deep-seated love, the pair get along, until Grant stumbles on an oozy, glowing glob in the woods. Once infected, he starts acting mighty peculiar, slurring words, growing lesions, turning his basement into a butcher shop.

Nathan Fillion (*Serenity*) is Bill Pardy, the town's underachieving police chief — and a guy who's

had a crush on Starla since high school. Can he save the town and get the girl?

And what about the slugs that are making their way to the house where the pretty teenager is taking her bubble bath?

Allen slugs, that is.

Gunn isn't aiming very high with *Slither*. This is a horror homage for the hardcore fan, a gross-out revisit of familiar themes, motifs, and slime-coated special effects. But the actors — whether they're the extras doing a herky-jerky zombie strut, or the leads dodging wiggly chili peppers and deadly spew — seem to be having a disgustingly good time.

Contact movie critic Steven Raa at 215-854-5629 or area@phillynews.com. Read his recent work at <http://go.philly.com/stevenraa>.

SLITHER
PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER
CIRC: 383,000
SUNDAY CIRC: 900,000
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Review (Positive) — 3 Stars of 4