

*Snakes on a Plane* (David R. Ellis, 2006)



Bits of this movie are quite disgusting, and should never have been filmed. The shots of women being bitten in the nipple, on the tongue and in the eye; the man being bitten on the end of his dick as he pees in the plane toilet; the Englishman being swallowed by the anaconda. You don't need them: neither do you need to know what happens when you trap a baby snake in the microwave and turn it on. The film would just as entertaining without them, and their presence lowers the tone of everything else. Fortunately they're mostly in the first half, so the film has time to recover. But that they're there at all shows the film-makers had no faith.

There's some good acting. Julianna Margulies is, you can see, the sort of actress who brings conviction to every line, however crass, and every situation, however ludicrous. As the principal stewardess, she stands out. Samuel L. Jackson is always watchable (though he's getting a bit *puffy* round the neck and jaw); but the script gives him no memorable Tarantino lines, and when at long last the stress of the plot forces the Oedipal noun and Oedipal participle from him without which no Jackson performance is complete, they appear looped, and edited-in.

Yes, the script acknowledges that snakes (like sting-rays!) don't normally attack unless threatened; but these snakes, you see, dummy, are *doped* snakes, made crazy by the bad guy with special gas pumped over the Hawaiian welcome-flowers in the hold with them. Why Hawaiian so many welcome-flowers would be in the hold of a plane flying *from* Honolulu *to* Los Angeles, on the other hand, we aren't told.

The passengers are well-differentiated; the boring ones, the ones set up as ghastly so when they're bitten to death we don't care too much, like the fat alcoholic woman who's bitten in the eye, and the anti-social Brit who's swallowed, etc., are out of the way quickly, victims of the plot. But you care about the little boy who's bitten, and for his big brother ("I was meant to look after him!"); neither is cute, and both are overweight, so you can identify. The Selfish Pop Idol who Learns the Meaning of Being Human is well-played by Flex Alexander; and his sidekick bodyguard, whose 2,000 hours flying time turn out to have been 2,000 hours on a video-game (but a *really good* video-game, an *educational* video game), gives the plot some good twists.

The final shock of all is predictable, but done so well and so quickly you don't have time to groan.

The anti-Bush subtext is clear enough. If only they could get rid of him by shooting out the portholes of a passenger jet. Even so, he does damage enough ...