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Snake oil in N—town

Steven Boone

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I happened upon Roger Corman's 1962 film *The Intruder* while casually surfing YouTube. Some twist of algorithmic fate led the site to suggest that movie for me. Less than five minutes into the film I understood why: William Shatner, America's Captain, pop sci-fi royalty, utters the word 'nigger'. YouTube knows that I like dissonance and collisions. Shatner's role as a seductive, psychopathic East Coast demagogue stirring up a racist Southern mob is all collision.

I watched the film in early 2016 as Donald Trump methodically annihilated his opponents one by one in the race for the Republican presidential nomination. While he never publicly uttered the n-word he did make many

outrageous claims and inflammatory statements that harmonise with Shatner's stump speeches in *The Intruder*. These parallels were enough to get me started on a video essay.

This video sets a few observations about *The Intruder* against manipulated images and sounds from the film. I mention no contemporary parallels, as they are as plain as a cross burning in the night. Instead the transitions and sound mix reflect more interest in the stages of a demagogue/racist mob relationship – the courtship rituals, honeymoon, and eventual disillusionment/estrangement. Corman made it all so palpable on a shoestring budget on location in Jim Crow America.

Author

Steven Boone has written film criticism for over 20 publications in print and online, including *The Village Voice*, *The Star-Ledger*, *Time Out NY*, and *Salon.com*. He is a writer-at-large for the website Capital New York and a contributor to three popular blogs: *Keyframe* (Fandor), *Press Play* (Indiewire), and *The House Next Door* (Slant Magazine). His experimental video essays blend film commentary, memoir, and documentary in a provocative DIY style.