



Photograph courtesy of Julie Adams

Julie Adams and the Gill Man are featured in this promotion shot from "Creature from the Black Lagoon," which was released in 1954. Adams was raised in Blytheville and moved to Little Rock when she was in high school.



CREATURE FEATURE

Julie Adams revisits the Black Lagoon, career

BY NICK THOMAS

Special to The Sun

How much mileage could a studio expect from a 1954 film starring a biologist with a fascination for a secluded fish pond? Quite a bit, when the scientist is beautiful Julie Adams wrapped in a skin-tight white latex bathing suit and the fish turns out to be an angry piscine amphibious humanoid — aka a "Creature from the Black Lagoon."

The success of the now cult film continues to astound Adams, who was born in Waterloo, Iowa, raised in Blytheville and later moved to Little Rock for high school.

Adams, 90, remains a popular guest at fan conventions and film festivals across the country.

"It's a classic beauty and the beast

story, with stunning underwater photography filmed at Wakulla Springs, Fla., because of its clear waters," said Adams, who portrayed scientist Kay Lawrence, abducted by the infatuated Gill Man towards the end of the creature feature.

"The lagoon scenes were shot at the Universal Studios backlot where 'Gilligan's Island' was filmed," Adams recalled. While her scenes were filmed in California, she enjoyed watching the dailies come in from the second film unit in Florida.

"Ginger Stanley doubled for me in the Wakulla Springs underwater shots, and Ricou Browning wore the rubber creature suit for swimming scenes," she said. "Ginger and Ricou essentially did an amazing underwater ballet routine, and it was amazing



Photograph courtesy of Julie Adams

Crew look on as Julie Adams receives minor medical attention after bumping her head during a scene in "Creature from the Black Lagoon."

to see how their scenes seamlessly blended with mine. Ricou could hold his breath underwater for three or four minutes but in the longer takes he and Ginger would have to swim to air hoses secretly placed in the water."

On land, the creature was played by Ben Chapman.

"Ben began going to fan conventions in the 1990s and convinced me to attend my first one in 2003," Adams said. "It's wonderful to meet so many people who still enjoy your

work. Ben was quite the showman at these events, and kids loved him. He would tell them how during filming, he couldn't just take the suit off because it was in parts and made of rubber which had to be glued together on him. So he had to be watered down between takes to cool off."

Fans have also shared some interesting admissions with Adams.

"Some told me they became zoologists or paleontologists because of the film. And I met a little girl who was named after my character," she said.

In 2011, she self-published her autobiography, "The Lucky Southern Star: Reflections from the Black Lagoon," co-authored with her son, Mitch Danton.

The book contains some 200 photographs, many unpublished from her personal collection, with a chapter devoted to the Black Lagoon. And from 2013-15, her home state honored her film career with the "Lights! Camera! Arkansas!" exhibit at the Old State House Museum in Little Rock.

Of course, the creature wasn't the only biped Adams co-starred with during her career. She shared top billing with less scaly characters including William Powell, Glenn Ford, Charlton Heston, Elvis Presley, Van Heflin, Rock Hudson and many others.

Please see **FEATURE** | C8



Photograph courtesy of the Old State House Museum

Julie Adams is pictured with a replica of the Gill Man from "Creature from the Black Lagoon" during the "Lights! Camera! Arkansas!" exhibit, which was on display in 2013-15 at the Old State House Museum in Little Rock.

ON THE LIST

Today:
Foundation of Arts presents "Bye, Bye Birdie," 2 p.m., The Forum, Jonesboro.

Today:
Delta Symphony Orchestra concert, 2 p.m., Riceland Hall, A-State Fowler Center.

Saturday:
'Star Wars' Read Day, 10 a.m. to noon, Craighead County Jonesboro Public Library.



NEXT WEEK:

Find out what's cooking on Wednesday's Taste page.

LIVING C2
MILESTONES C3
ARTS C5
CROSSWORD C6
ENTERTAINMENT C7