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ittens chasing butterflies. Spaceships roaming the stars. Kaleidoscopic and surreal color montages that blend and whirl to fascinate the eye. Messages left on the screen... all of these are in my screensaver collection. So what on Earth could I possibly be missing?

A monster head sneezing goo on my screen!

Unique
I am certainly glad that these reviews come with screenshots, because I truly have little clue how I would begin to describe the art style of Stephen Blickenstaff. I do not know if it is his work in particular or work in his vein that is so popular on a number of POGs — the bottlecap/game collectibles that have become very hot recently — but I am aware that this style of mutant monster heads dwells somewhere in my subconscious. Little did I know that one day they would be housed upon my screen!

Ready for Something Different?
So, if you have tired of the humor of Bill and Opus, the sereneness of Snoopy and the Starfleet collections, welcome to the gross-out of Screamsavers. Screamsavers is not really properly a "Scary" Screensaver, but it sure packs a wallop in the gross category. Bodily fluids play a starring role in a number of the modules. All 15 modules are well-crafted pieces of these floating monster heads doing what, one supposes, monster heads do in their copious

spare time — belching on passersby, erupting out of toxic waste cans, being the inhuman bug-zapper in a marsh, sneezing fluids onto corners of your screen. All are impressively drawn, with appropriate sucking, blowing, belching, sneezing, and otherwise excreting sounds to titillate the little child in you that still enjoys bathroom jokes.

imitations

I will try and not go into the standard litany of "Most of these really aren't screensavers, since they often occupy parts of the screen with background that does not move." We all know the reason we tend to buy screensavers has little to do with functionality and almost everything to do with entertainment. And, if you like the sort of goo-humor that Screamsavers offers, you'll enjoy this collection. However, there are some limitations in the collection that I felt could have been worked around by different design choices.

My first real gripe is that these are really less Screensaver modules than they are self-contained movies. Each Screensaver is effectively a film loop that does a sequence of actions over and over and over again. Now, some of these sequences take some time to play out; some appear to do the same thing over and over, but every fourth iteration they do something different. But in the end there is nothing configurable about these modules, nothing random. If a monster is hiding in the clouds ready to belch on passersby, I thought it would be better to have more than three or four passersby — maybe 10 or 12, and have them randomly come out rather than all in a sequence. And, it might not hurt if one or two of those passersby had different reactions. The lack of variance makes this a missed opportunity.

The second complaint is that in order to create these movie loops, Screamsavers is

incompatible with the Multimodule function. This is really too bad, as I had a lot of cool ideas — Monsters sneezing on kittens chasing butterflies; monsters emerging from toxic waste as Mister Spock walked up to them on screen, read them with his tricorder, and said "fascinating;" and monsters barfing on that annoying lawnmower guy. Alas, my dreams of perverse mirth remain just mental mock-ups of what could have been.

In Summary
Screamsavers is a fun and gross collection of film loops of these monster heads doing their thing. Teen boys are gonna go nuts over this collection — then again, they also went to see Dumb and Dumber. The modules are amusing the first time through, but very quickly grow redundant due to the lack of randomness inside of each module. However, many screensaver collections give you very few modules, and 15 modules is a good number for an After Dark collection. Now, my only question — while you leave for lunch, how's your boss gonna react when she is drawn to your desktop Mac by the sound of Monster spewing?

Pros
• Well-drawn and animated modules
• Humorous in a rather perversely gross way
• Fifteen modules versus some collections which give much fewer modules
• Stand alone product which contains the After Dark 3.0 engine

Cons
• Modules are film loops, no randomization
• Modules cannot be run in Multimodule mode
• May have narrow appeal

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