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Frog Dreaming

(aka: "The Quest")

Australia : 1985 : dir. Brian Trenchard-Smith : UAA

: 93 min

prod: Barbi Taylor : scr: Everett DeRoche : dir.ph.: John McLean

[Henry Thomas](#)

Tony Barry; Rachel Friend; Tamsin West; Dennis Miller; Katyn Manning; John Ewart;

Dempsey Knight; Mark Knight; Chris Gregory

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ ∅ Z ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Source: 30th London Film Festival programme

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide
1996 review:

"Abortive Australian attempt to capitalise on young Thomas' success as the star of "E.T."; here he plays a precocious *[sic]* child who, along with a couple of pals, visits an aboriginal burial ground where a Loch Ness-style monster lives. Competently made but uninteresting. *½ "

The Time Out Film Guide review:

"Something's alive at the bottom of an uncharted pond, and 10-year old adventurer Cody (Henry Thomas of "E.T.") is determined to find it. Director Trenchard-Smith sets the

action of this children's movie (involving aboriginal magic) in a remote town in southern Australia, constructing the parallel worlds of doting adults and their irrepressible children as a foundation for his adventure in minutiae. The real adventure, however, is Trenchard-Smith's rediscovery of boyhood, with all its inventiveness, innocence *[sic]* and independent, fearless strength."

Video Movie Guide 1993 review:

"Henry Thomas plays a young boy living in Australia who has reason to believe that a monster lives in a small lake not far from his home. He sets out to prove the creature's

existence - or to expose it as a fraud. Though slow, this film has decent acting. Rated "PG".
** "

30th London Film Festival (1986) programme review:

"An action-packed children's film which is simultaneously thoughtful and full of insight, **"FROG DREAMING"** stars **"E.T."**'s Elliott (Henry Thomas) as a boy discovering the reality of Aboriginal magic in the Australian outback. Written by Everett DeRoche, one of the great (unsung) film writers around, and directed by Brian Trenchard-Smith (**"BMX BANDITS"**), **"FROG DREAMING"** is much more than a "rites of passage" movie; it is a genuinely suspenseful thriller with sufficient invention in both literal (Cody's super-speedy, highly modified "rail-bike") and visual terms to rivet child and adult alike to their seats."

- Sandy Broughton.

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

TV Quick review:

"A delightful kiddie-pic, with Henry Thomas (Elliott from **"E.T."**) living out in the bush and convinced, along with the local aborigines, that something lurks in the billabong. A portrait of childhood yearning in the face of adult scepticism, the movie is refreshingly free from cuteness and the landscape images are beautiful. *** "

"Cody Walpole is an American orphan living with his dead father's pal Down Under. He is fascinated by a local lake, in the depths of which lurks a legendary monster."

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Henry Thomas:

"The boy hero of **"E.T."** was unusual among child actors in being quite without charm, at least of the ingratiating kind. He seldom smiled; his square, thoughtful face was generally worried and, as he got older, rather forbidding. Far from making Henry Thomas unsympathetic, this made one warm to a serious kid facing serious problems. The problems in **"E.T."**, of course, were themselves unusual: the discovery and concealment of a superior alien like a withered, unshelled turtle with haunting eyes.

In **"MISUNDERSTOOD"** (a lame remake of Luigi Comencini's fine **"INCOMPRESO"** of 1966) Thomas is a boy thought by his father to be irresponsible and unfeeling: a strong 19th-century story with a tragic ending. The issues in **"CLOAK AND DAGGER"** were more traditional: fantasising child witnesses murder and becomes embroiled in Hitchcockian spy plot. **"FROG DREAMING"**, the best of the post-**"E.T."** vehicles - aka **"THE QUEST"** - transported Henry to Australia, where he stalked a Loch Ness-type monster in a haunted lake. Since then, Thomas's biggest screen role has been as Danceny in Milos Forman's **"VALMONT"** (1989), a relatively romantic version of *"Les Liaisons Dangereuses"*."

No further information currently available. Also exhibited at the Cannes, Milan and Madrid film festivals of 1986. "Precocious", "innocent" and "rites of passage" – three clichés for the price of one, so we can be sure the film centres on a young boy. On the face of it, it's just another Nessie picture larded with aborigine hocus-pocus (as seen in "**THE LAST WAVE**" – '77), but be warned that "**BMX BANDITS**" from the same director was a lazy, tired and derivative kids-outwit-the-crooks yarn, indistinguishable from a dozen other Children's Film Foundation titles. This one, it's to be hoped, is nowhere near so formulaic.

Born in 1971, Henry Thomas is 14 here. Although he hoped his starring role in "**E.T. THE EXTRATERRESTRIAL**" - at that time the most successful film ever made - would be a springboard to more serious parts, he was not well-served in any of his follow-up features and, like Ricky Schroder before him, failed to consolidate early success. Before this Australian production (where Schroder also had made "**THE EARTHLING**") he was seen in "**THE PITTSBURGH STEELER AND THE CINCINATTI KID**", "**RAGGEDY MAN**", "**CLOAK AND DAGGER**" and "**MISUNDERSTOOD**" (with Huckleberry Fox). In 1990 he finally landed a meatier role as the young Norman Bates in the TV movie "**PSYCHO IV - THE BEGINNING**", but then in "**FIRE IN THE SKY**" (93) he had an inconsequential part as the nerviest of a clutch of lumberjacks (for pity's sake) who claim to have witnessed a UFO abduction. As Henry discovered, grave and earnest small boys are often charming, but grave and earnest youths tend to blend in with the background. Holmstrom lists only Thomas for this film, but clearly several others in the cast above – the two Knights, for instance – will be kids also.

See subject index under **AUSTRALASIA, ORPHANS / ADOPTION** and (depending on what form the creature takes) **DRAGONS & DINOSAURS**.