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Bong of the Dead (UK DVD)

Bong of the Dead Jy Harris Left Films Mark Wynn Simone Bailly Thomas Newman UK

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Reviewed by Pestilence
April 22nd, 2012

Starring Simone Bailly, Mark Wynn, Jy Harris

Directed by Thomas Newman

Distributed by **Left Films**



The stoner comedy and zombie apocalypse genres combine in writer/director/editor/producer/composer/ animator (and more!) Thomas Newman's much-less-amusing-than-it-thinks-it-is micro-budget offering *Bong of the Dead*.

A number of years after a shower of falling meteorites kick-start a zombie pandemic, the authorities have managed to contain the bulk of the walking dead within the "Danger Zone", leaving the majority of the human population relatively unimpeded by flesh eaters. Amidst this new world, stoner pals Edwin (Wynn) and Tommy (Harris) spend their days enveloped in a haze of cannabis smoke, before Edwin makes the earth-shattering discovery that ground-up zombie brains mixed with water makes for some seeeeerrriously effective marijuana fertiliser.

After blazing through their new super-dope in record time, the dismayed duo hatch a hare-brained plan to take a trip into the Danger Zone to acquire some of their new precious commodity. There, they come face to face with a budding undead overlord, a sexy survivalist by the name of Leah (Bailly) – who sports a rather ingenious shower setup – and a small horde of zombies. And, well... that's pretty much all there is to it.

Almost lacking as much focus in its narrative as the protagonists in just about everything they do, *Bong of the Dead* is a playful but ultimately plodding and frustrating attempt at horror-comedy. The opening pre-credit sequence offers a dialogue-free, visually vibrant introduction to the zombie infection that carries a promising, but stunted, charm of its own – including some truly icky practical effects that hearken lovingly to the early films of the venerable Peter Jackson. Despite this, pacing issues raise their head almost immediately with the sequence running on at least twice as long as it should. Problems are compounded when our dope-tastic duo are introduced and the previous lack of dialogue becomes a very fond memory.

You see, while the acting itself throughout *Bong of the Dead* may be entirely passable, the lead characters are such incompetent, useless excuses for human beings that there simply is no way to relate to them. They literally do nothing but get high, talk a ton of shit, and show a complete lack of concern for both their own and each other's safety unless the script has decided to be



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serious for a moment. As they shriek, posture, contort and thrust their way through countless drug-induced, half-naked musical interludes like ADD-addled children, the affinity of any audience beyond those already too baked to care will be stretching very, very thin. The almost complete lack of zombies during the second act of the film becomes all the more noticeable when the characters are this insufferable to listen to; for a film like this to work, they need to be drawn as the kind of endearing nincompoops that one could expect to undertake boneheaded ventures for their own virtuous reasons. Rather, these guys are just a pair of fucking selfish idiots with a tenuous grip on reality. Cheech and Chong this ain't.

On the plus side, when zombies are actually the focus of the action here, director Newman does a hell of a good job. Visual effects, especially the practical, are top-notch for a production with this kind of budget, and plenty of love for the genre classics (especially Jackson's *Braindead*, aka *Dead Alive*) is spread all over. Heightened colour levels add a lighthearted comic book feel to the proceedings, even if the over-lighting isn't always successful. Mind you, this may also be an intentional play to the *ahem* augmented senses of the intended audience.

There's plenty of ambition, and talent, on display behind the camera here though. Newman most certainly has the chops to move on to bigger and better things, and gore and zombie fans will find enough to keep them interested -- but *Bong of the Dead* fails to ignite with its script and quickly becomes an experience akin to being the only sober person in a room full of drunk and stoned exhibitionists who think they're the funniest people on Earth: Occasional spasms of unhinged comedic ingenuity appear, but whether you see them will depend entirely on your own willpower. Get yourself suitably *ahem* augmented and you may be able to add a knife or two to the score. Your call.

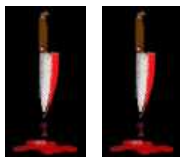
Left Films' release of *Bong of the Dead* comes disappointingly light on the special features front, featuring a behind-the-scenes segment that is so laughably short (at two and a half minutes) it might as well not even be there -- offering little to no insight whatsoever and lacking any form of interviews or exposure for the cast and crew. Following this, we have director Thomas Newman giving us a brief, but interesting rundown of the ultra-tedious, painstaking work that goes into compositing even the briefest of shots using Adobe After Effects. It succeeds in giving an appreciation of the amount of work that had to be put into the film post-production but again lacks substantial insight given the meagre runtime.

Finally, two trailers for the film that possibly offer more in unintentional laughs than the movie itself does when it's trying its hardest. Both opening with an unmitigated gushing of Newman's ego all over your face, it'll be hard to contain a belly laugh as the word "DREAMER" slowly swells on screen.

Special Features

- Behind-the-Scenes featurette
- Director Thomas Newman on VFX
- Trailers

Film



2 out of 5

Special Features:



1 1/2 out of 5

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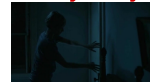
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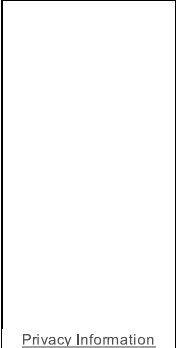
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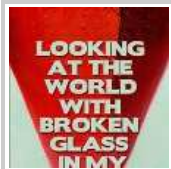
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