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Bong Of The Dead (2009)

[Film Reviews](#) — By [Kevin Matthews](#) on June 17, 2011 at 8:30 am

I've never seen the movies of Cheech & Chong but I have seen clips that made me laugh. The Harold and Kumar movies prompted some chuckles from me. I even admit that I may be the only person left in the world who still staunchly defends a love of *Dude, Where's My Car?* Which is all my way of letting people know that I'm not averse to the occasional bit of stoner comedy. And, of course, everyone already knows that I will

always welcome the opportunity to view some zombie carnage. So I really wanted to like *Bong Of The Dead*, a labour of love crafted by writer-director-editor-producer Thomas Newman over a considerable period of time.

Things starts off with a relatively dialogue-free pre-credits sequence that shows how some meteors landing on Earth kick-start an epidemic of zombiefication. Then there's a nifty, animated credits sequence with a random reference to everyone's favourite slacker, Ferris Bueller. So far so good. What we get next, however, is about an hour of lowbrow comedy that would take pride of place in any Troma movie, a couple of decent moments here and there and the strange feeling that the stoners have altogether forgotten that zombies are a major threat to their hazy lives. A 15-20 minute blood-strewn finale can't quite make up for the failings of the rest of the movie but it's so over the top and impressively realised that it comes surprisingly close. Keep watching for a ridiculously enjoyable little post-credits sequence at the end and what you're left with is a bittersweet experience. Any movie that centres around a pothead who finds out that squished and processed zombie brains can lead to some super-powerful weed deserves some kudos, surely.

Things become even more bittersweet when you get a chance to hear Thomas Newman speak passionately about his movie (full interview [here](#)) because Newman is clearly a guy with his heart in the right place, plenty of braincells up top and the urge to make enjoyable movies. I REALLY want to see a sequel to *Bong Of The Dead* but parts of this movie made it difficult at times.

What was wrong? Why couldn't I love a film mixing the walking dead with the toking living? Well, I'd have to say that the biggest obstacle the movie has is the script. Having thought and thought at length about just what was holding the film back it's the script I keep coming back to.

The acting from those involved isn't all that bad at all. Mark Wynn as Edwin and Jy Harris as Tommy portray a couple of standard potheads while Simone Bailly is a great kick-ass heroine and Barry Berling makes for a fun, big baddie. None of these people may be at the top of the acting tree but they're all quite a way up from the bottom rung (with Berling, in particular, deserving some praise for his grandstanding moments).

The special effects are great (those hours spent by Newman slaving in post-production really paid off), especially whenever based around any of the "lead" zombies, and although there are only a few sparse locations used they're actually used quite well.

Stylistically, the movie is unfussy and does what needs to be done – though there are one or two moments that admirably show the mind-warping effects of differing drugs – but there are often times when scenes are given a finish reminiscent of work done by The Spierig Brothers (though, to clarify, *Undead* was a movie that Newman saw AFTER *Bong Of The Dead* was in post production). It's generally excellent work and a real treat for fans who have become used to simply accepting low-budget, lo-fi work within their independent horror movies.

But that script, things just keep coming back to that script. There are significant portions of the film when nothing exciting or comedic happens and even in the scenes when the laughs and/or blood start to flow you just can't help but think that some sharper writing and dark one-liners could have been fitted in there.

As it is, we're left with something that shows a director with the potential to get his name stuck alongside the likes of Jackson, Raimi and even Henenlotter if only the sequel can fully realise every potential positive aspect. Which may require Newman the director to kick the ass of Newman the writer.

DIRECTOR: THOMAS NEWMAN

STARS: MIKE WYNN, JY HARRIS, SIMONE BAILLY, BARRY NERLING

RUNTIME: 91 MINS APPROX

COUNTRY: CANADA

Film Rating: ★★★★★☆☆☆☆

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2 Comments



- [Kevin Matthews](#) says:
[June 18, 2011 at 2:48 pm](#)

I hope Thomas appreciates the comments here and doesn't feel too hard done by. Do let me know, Robin, if we get any more feedback from him as I'm seriously looking forward to seeing what he can do in future anyway 😊

Rating: +1 (from 1 vote)



- [Kevin Matthews](#) says:
[November 18, 2011 at 6:09 pm](#)

P.S. Barry Berling, mentioned in the review, should be Barry Nerling as per the credit listing (my fat fingers at work there).

Rating: 0 (from 0 votes)

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have. :-)...



[Miguel Rosa](#): I'm really curious about Drive; I'm watching it tomorrow - I hope it's not a huge disappointment....



[Justin Smith](#): I'll save you Kevin!!! As you know, I HATED Melancholia, loved Drive, really liked Attack the Block and have yet to see ...



[Kevin Matthews](#): Well Tue, we pretty much agree on this selection. I may have put Expendables 2 in there instead of G.I. Joe 2 (which doe...



[Kevin Matthews](#): I'm surrounded by lovers of Melancholia, dagnammit ;-)...

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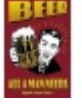
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