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Movie Reviews

Written by Joel Harley

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Bong of the Dead DVD Review

Written by [Joel Harley](#)DVD released by [Left Films](#)

Directed by Thomas Newman
Written by Thomas Newman
2011, Region 2 (PAL), 91 minutes, Rated 18
DVD released on 16 April 2012

Starring:

Simone Bailey as Leah
Mark Wynn as Edwin
Jy Harris as Tommy
Barry Nerling as Alex/Robot Zombie
Vince Laxton as Victor Hoagan
Chris Staite as Martha



Review:

A pair of stoners cheerfully sit out the zombie apocalypse which has overrun their world. They become uncharacteristically purposeful when they discover that zombie brains make the perfect fertiliser for their homegrown cannabis. In order to source some more of this super plant food they must travel into the heart of the Danger Zone, where the zombies are omnipresent. Along the way they encounter a chatty zombie boss, a strong, sexy love interest and plenty of opportunities to get high. Can Bong of the Dead transcend the limits of the stoner subgenre, or is just another half-baked horror comedy?



Thomas Newman's debut feature initially offers a little more ambition than the average stoner horror comedy. It opens with a meteor crashing into our planet and infecting unsuspecting victims with a grisly intergalactic disease. Bong of the Dead promises Braindead levels of fun and instead delivers another Harold and Kumar Get the Munchies (mmm, brains). Despite a fantastically well done pre-credits sequence, it doesn't take long for Bong of the Dead to descend into a haze of stoner jokes and puerile fart gags. The first 'comedy' fart comes during the credits and the rest come thick and fast afterwards – relenting only so that the film's heroes can call one another stupid again or roll up another blunt. Stoner humour can be funny at times (see The Tripper and Pineapple Express for an example of it done well) but it usually tends to be as tiresome as potheads themselves. Bong of the Dead might play a lot better to the weed smoking crowd, but it's a sign of a damn poor movie if one has to be off their face in order to enjoy it.

Simone Bailey's Leah is initially set up as a relief from Edwin and Tommy and their Cheech & Chong shtick, but she quickly becomes as unbearable as they are. As she comes to enjoy their company more, we like her less. She's supposed to be viewed as a hot action heroine, but she's as paper thin and uninteresting as Megan Fox in Transformers. Given that she shares no chemistry with her supposed love interest, it's just another character to hate.



Yet beyond the stupid characters and their obsession with getting high, Bong of the Dead (the title a misnomer, since there is no bong) is a movie almost worth watching. Its incredibly low budget is well spent. The gore and zombie killing action is very well done, the music competent and the acting average. There's even a fun and original villain in the form of a strangely verbose zombie dictator. The last twenty minutes deliver so much gore and splatter that one could even make a comparison to Braindead and not look foolish. It does for the garden strimmer what Peter Jackson's zombie masterpiece did for the lawnmower. For this final twenty minutes, Bong of the Dead is almost charming. A joke with an open brain and some chopsticks delivers a cheap but loud laugh. Never does the film feel so disappointing as when it's at its best. I tried to enjoy the rest of it, but it's like being the only sober one at a party. There's little intelligent conversation to be had, just people talking nonsense and celebrating their own farts.

Bong of the Dead is technically well made but fritters away its potential on a shoddy script, horrible characters and pursuit of a niche audience. Taking a (ganja) leaf out of its characters' book (of Rizla papers), Bong of the Dead puts the 'waste' into waster.

**Video and Audio:**

The film's look and sound do not belie its minuscule budget. It looks a lot better than most other straight to DVD zombie releases, and sounds good too.

Special Features:

There's an unrevealing behind the scenes featurette and a short, dry piece with Newman in which he describes the intricacies of post production and video effects.

Grades:

Movie: ★★☆☆☆
Video: ★★☆☆☆
Audio: ★★☆☆☆
Features: ★★☆☆☆

Overall: ★★☆☆☆



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