

BONG OF THE DEAD


Reviewed by: [Pat Torfe](#)

Directed by: Thomas Newman

Starring:

Mark Wynn
Jy Harris
Simone Bailly
Barry Nerling



Movie: 
DVD: 
Overall: 

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WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

The world's become infested with zombies after meteors crash land and turn people into the walking dead. Two people who could care less, Tommy and Edwin, spend their days getting high with different types of weed. Eventually, Edwin is inspired to use pureed zombie brains for fertilizer. The result is some powerful bud that eventually runs low for the two of them. In response, the duo hit the road to harvest some zombie brains for their bumper crop. Hot chicks, blood, guts and Nazi zombies ensue.

IS IT A GOOD MOVIE?

NOTE: I reviewed this indie puppy last year. Rather than reinvent the wheel, here's what I had to say about the film back then. And yes, I completely agree with what I had to say.

Yeah, I laughed at the title, too. BONG OF THE DEAD. What is that? Is it some sort of bizarre mashup of HAROLD AND KUMAR and SHAUN OF THE DEAD? Is it even worth watching, knowing that the film was shot/written/directed in 15 days by one Thomas Newman, a man with a \$5000 budget and several years of work put into the filming and post-production of this pet project? Thankfully, these questions were answered and then some with some truly pleasant hits from this joint. BONG OF THE DEAD may just be the horror compliment to Cheech and Chong you've been looking for.

Right away, big props to Newman. The guy has managed to pull off what many indie filmmakers attempt to do but all-too-often fall short on: being an everyman. Newman's camerawork in the film is spot-on, showing off some shots that I honestly didn't think would come from an indie director. Really, who knew you could take opening shots of an old guy painting his garden gnomes in his basement lit only by the fluorescent light fixtures with classical music playing in the background and make them so professional-looking? It sounds simple, but the way that it's done looks so polished that it really is a wonder that it's from a low-budget indie flick. Throw in an inventive plot, some genuinely funny dialogue that's believable (even if it's filled with more "dudes" than I care to count), a great cast and some great musical touches, this film looks miles above what you'd expect from something shot for just 5K.

Speaking of the look, it's all about the zombies and the gore. Again, how the heck did they pull this off? The answer is in Mike Fields, who also co-produced the film. The guy's done countless makeup effects work on films such as FIDO, THIR13EN GHOSTS and the MASTERS OF HORROR tv series, as well as being grouped in the same crowd as KNB EFX. Yes, *that* KNB. Really, I was floored with what I was seeing. The zombies certainly looked miles above what you'd expect from a low-budget horror film, and the gory details were top-notch.

Now, the film's not perfect. I mean, \$5000 can only do so much, right? The weakest parts of the film involve the ADR. It seems as though Newman had problems with the audio, and as such much of it had to be dubbed in. The results are at times quite clumsy. Think of the dubbing of Lucio Fulci's ZOMBIE and you'll get the idea. It's very noticeable at times, and detracts from what's going on, especially during the scenes that are meant to develop characters. Also, while the CGI is admirable (believe me, it's better than some SyFy productions), there are some shots that are so blatantly CG, the crash-landed meteor at the start of the film being an obvious one. The actors try to work the best that they can, but it's still obvious what's real and what's been done by computer. But hey, the effort is there, and very appreciated.

Once this bowl's been smoked, BONG OF THE DEAD is one film that definitely deserved it's spot at Cannes. The fact that the film was shot in such a short time on so little money, and the fact that it was all largely one guy is nothing short of astounding. Even if you're not a fan of zombie films or comedy films involving stoners on their wacky adventures, this is still one that indie filmmakers should see for the technique and the determination to get your idea out there and done right.

VIDEO / AUDIO

Video: Shot on digital video, the **1.66:1 anamorphic widescreen** transfer shows off great colour and good detail, giving off a live-action comic book feel. While there's no film grain to speak of, the film does suffer at times from chromatic aberrations and blown-out areas (particularly at the beginning of the film), but that doesn't take away from the enjoyment of the film.

Audio: The **Dolby Digital 2.0** is a standard track that doesn't exactly pop, but again it's another limitation of the budget. It still gets the job done, with clear dialogue and no distortion of any, showing off a great orchestral score.

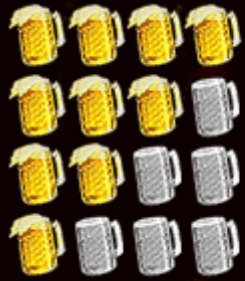
THE EXTRAS

Sadly, the only thing included this time around is the film's **trailer**, complete with funky music. It would've been great to hear about the film being at Cannes and Sitges in a commentary of some sort.

LAST CALL

The horror lover's answer to UP IN SMOKE, BONG OF THE DEAD deserves attention not just for the gory goodness, but also for the effort and technique used by Thomas Newman. This guy definitely deserves to get some notice for what he's done here, horror or otherwise. Hit this one.

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FM DRUNK LIKE A SAILOR ON LEAVE!

DARN GOOD BUZZ!

SOMEBODY WATERED MY DRINK!

WHAT IS THIS PISS?

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