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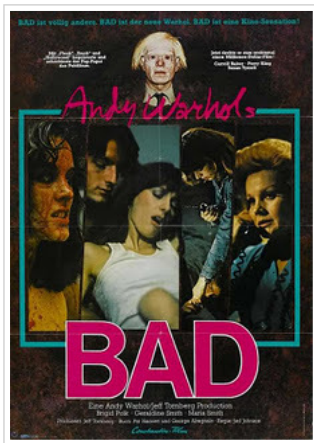
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THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2011

Andy Warhol's Bad - DVD Review (Warhol's last theatrical release)



Andy Warhol's last theatrical release *Bad* (1977) was recently re-released on DVD by the label Cheezy Flicks. The movie is classic, black-humored film noir that is set in the urban war zone of late 70's New York and this film may have set the stage for later films like *Natural Born Killers* and *Serial Mom*.

The film centers around Queens housewife Hazel Aiken who runs an electrolysis service out of her house but makes extra money by providing ruthless women to do hit jobs. The role is played with an icy ruthlessness by Carroll Baker but it was offered first to Vivian Vance.

Bob Colacello: "We had already tried to get Vivian Vance to play the lead... It was a far cry from the *I Love Lucy* show, but we thought Vivian Vance would be perfect for the part... Vivian Vance thought differently. 'I'd love to do it, Andy, I really would,' she told us over dinner at La Caravelle. 'But you must understand that for all those people out there I'm still Ethel Mertz, *Lucy's* next-door neighbor and the nicest woman in America, and that's why I can still go into any dinner theater in the country and get paid \$20,000 a week, because all my nice fans in their mink stoles want to see Ethel Mertz be nice. I hate being nice and I hate my fans and I hate their mink stoles. But I love making \$20,000 a week anytime I want..."

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The movie starts with Cyrinda Foxxe trashing a diner and some of the other "jobs" that Mrs. Aiken's girls take on include amputation (dropping a car on the person's legs) and both dog and baby killing. The censors originally gave this movie an X rating and the film was banned in Germany which may have been due to a scene where a baby is throw out of a window. The remorseless violence is consistently mixed with black humored one-liners - as the baby/doll lays splattered on the pavement, a mother turns to her child and says "*That's what I'll do to you, if you don't shut up*".

Mrs. Aiken's character is equal part cold-blooded killer and "June Cleaver" housewife and she rationalizes what she does as taking personal responsibility and having a professional work ethic. On one hand, Aiken arranges these murder-for-hire killings from a phone in her kitchen and tries short-changing the blind news stand person. On the other hand, she admonishes the trash-talking sisters Marsha and Glenda "*I don't like toilet talk in my kitchen. You girls are colorful. A lot of girls today are.*"

The supporting characters are what gives the movie its character. There is the belching, gas-passing psycho Estelle ("*I've got a lot of gas in me. My doctor says I'm an air swallower*") who wants her neighbor's dog killed "viciously" as she believes that the neighbor made fun of her weight. There is the mincing and perpetually shell-shocked daughter-in-law Mary Aiken, played by Susan Tyrrell, who is completely out of touch with the world but, at the same time, seems to be the only sane character in this film. There is also Detective Hughes, played Charles McGregor, whose outrageously bad portrayal of a cop on the take, is so bad that it is campy fun.

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Things start to go bad for Mrs. Aiken when Marsha and Glenda fail to complete the job of killing Lawrence Tierney's (who is referred to as "O'Reily O'Crapface") dog and layabout nephew L.T. (played by Perry King), who wanted in on the action, finds that he can't go forward with the killing of an autistic child. The movie ends with Aiken losing her cool as her world starts unraveling and taking her frustrations out on the wrong person. To say anymore though would spoil the movie's ending...

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▶ [June \(17\)](#)

▶ [May \(29\)](#)

▶ [April \(21\)](#)

▶ [March \(39\)](#)

▶ [February \(33\)](#)

▶ [January \(44\)](#)

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▶ [2009 \(383\)](#)

▶ [2008 \(337\)](#)

▶ [2007 \(431\)](#)

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