

## RANDOM SAMPLES

# NOTHING BETTER THAN A REALLY BAD MOVIE

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Every year, hundreds of movies are released and dozens are nominated for Academy Awards. Just viewing the ones up for this year's Oscars would take more than 50 hours.

Why, then, when there are so many great films to choose from, do people like me waste so much precious time watching movies that aren't just bad, they're terrible?

How can I justify making time in my busy schedule for the 1992 horror flick, *Dr. Giggles* (The doctor is in...sane)? Why bother to rent *Jack Frost* (1996), a movie based on the idea that a serial killer can be transformed into a snowman?

I understand your concern. These movies have paper-thin special effects, outrageous plotlines, and a propensity to feature John Travolta's brother or Sylvester Stallone's younger sibling or ... you get the picture.

They are campy, corny, crazy, and completely, fantastically bad. And I love them for it. Most movies ask you to appreciate their witty dialogue or crisp plot. They want you to sit there silently and take them in, soaking up so much of your attention that there's room for nothing else.

Bad movies aren't like that. They are interactive. They beg you to shout at the screen, nudge the guy in the seat next to you, moan aloud at a particularly dopey line. The entire purpose of watching, say, *Barbarella: Queen of the Galaxy* (1968) is so you can lean over to your friend and make a wisecrack about the oversexed space cadet Jane Fonda as she battles little flesh-eating dolls or undresses in zero gravity.

### VIDEO

[Watch trailers from bad movies](#)

A good B-movie is better than a well-made comedy because you make the jokes yourself. Every screening is like being in an episode of *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, the old television series based on the premise that people would watch a show about pals ridiculing bad movies.

For years, a ragtag group of friends and I gathered to enjoy stuff like this. We regularly perused the local video store looking for kitschy, low-budget titles like *Dollman* (1991), the story of a crime fighter from a distant planet who is miniaturized when he comes to Earth. Our favorites tended to be particularly dated or full of Hollywood has-beens (see: Estrada, Erik; *Night of the Wilding*, 1990).

It may sound blasphemous, but I'm convinced that you've got a much better chance at throwing a successful movie night if you skip *The Godfather* in favor of *Disco Godfather* (1979), with its roller-skating dancers and bad kung fu.

(A quick warning to readers: Do not attempt to watch *Disco Godfather*, or any other B-movie, alone. Solitary viewing could result in yawning and feelings of boredom.)

This is not to discount the value of good movies. I love well-made films. I saw *The Wrestler* last week and thoroughly enjoyed it. I even talked about it a little the next day. But it was years ago that I saw the Village People in the silly musical *Can't Stop the Music* (1980) — the story (sort of) behind the group's formation — and I'm still raving about it.

Furthermore, some B-movies really do have a message. Otherwise, you wouldn't find Joan Collins battling giant, mind-controlling, radioactive insects in *Empire of the Ants* (1977). Forget about Al Gore and his inconvenient truth;



this environmental threat sounds way scarier.

No one sets out to make a bad movie, but thankfully many succeed. I call it a success because B-movies manage to entertain viewers and transform cinema into a communal experience at the same time.

The fact that they exist at all should be inspiring to everyone, especially in these tough economic times. After all, if someone can be paid to make a movie called *Leprechaun 4: In Space* (1997) — and never even explain how the little guy got there — then there's hope for all of us.

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