**So-Bad-It’s-Good**

**Assignment Task:** Watch a film that is obviously terrible. Explain why it is incompetant but point out that it does have several redeeming qualities.

NOTE: ‘THE ROOM’ IS OFF LIMITS FOR THIS ASSIGNMENT! ...AND NO PARODY MOVIES!

What does “terrible” mean? Lots of possibilities here… First, it’s not won Golden Globe or Academy Awards. Look for films with painful acting, low-budgets that make for a weak production, awful dialogue, situations so improbable that not even a five year old can suspend disbelief….

**What does “so bad it’s good” mean?** It’s a terrible film (see above) but one that has a few standout elements. The most common is unintentional comedy value but there are other options. Perhaps all of the actors are little more than amateurs but one performer actually has talent. Or maybe the dialogue and production are awful but the scenery makes up for many of the flaws.

**Basically, the film you choose should be more “BAD” than “GOOD” but you must be able to identify several qualities that make a viewing worthwhile.**

**Here are three rules to determine if a movie counts as So-Bad-It’s-Good:**

1. Enjoyment of the movie can be derived from its badness. You laugh in delight because it is terrible.
2. There must be a sense that those who made the film thought what they were creating was great, or at least good. So-Bad-They’re Good Movies have minimal self-awareness. Here are two examples that may help explain this:
   (a) *Sharknado* is not a So-Bad-It’s-Good Movie, it’s a tribute/parody of to monster movies.
   (b) *Fast Five* is not a So-Bad-It’s-Good Movie, it is a movie that intentionally wades into ridiculousness.
3. The movie must have been something of a critical failure when it was released. It might have made a mountain of money but on Rotten Tomatoes the “top critic score” must be lower than 40%.

**What to Write**

**Basic Info:** Film Title, Year, Director, Rotten Tomatoes Average Score by Top Critics (note: IF ‘top critics score’ is unavailable, use the ‘all critics score’)

**Paragraph #1 –** A brief (100 word) synopsis of the film’s plot. Don’t worry about spoilers.

**Paragraph #2 –** Two or more reasons why the film is bad. Refer to at least one scene.

**Paragraph #3 –** Two or more reasons to explain why it is worth watching. This is the so-bad-it’s-good part. Refer to at least one scene.

**Warning:** Except for quoted dialogue, these must be your words.

If you plagiarize you’ll receive a zero for this assignment.
**Bloodsport** (1988)
Director: Newt Arnold    Rotten Tomatoes Top Critics Score: 33%

**Plot Synopsis:** Once a year an underground combat society holds a “kumite”, a no-holds-barred fighting competition to determine the world’s top martial artist. American Frank Dux (Jean-Claude Van Damme) enters the Hong Kong tournament to honour his deceased teacher and engages in brutal matches en route to the championship. (Fun Fact: This film was modeled after the video game “Street Fighter” and in turn inspired “Mortal Kombat”.)

**Why this film is bad**

(1) The Acting - First of all, the acting is atrocious. Van Damme is supposed to play an American but his Belgian accent mangles his delivery and his facial expressions rarely match the mood. For example, in one scene his friend, Ray, has let down his guard and is about to be battered by the competition’s top villain. Van Damme screams a warning but rather than alerting his pal to danger he appears to be laughing. It is painfully obvious that the fighters in this film were chosen for their martial arts abilities rather than their acting talents.

(2) Overt racism – In “Bloodsport” white people are “good” and practically all others are bad, especially Asians. One particularly blatant example of racism is making the single African fighter have a martial arts style modeled on apes/monkeys.

(3) Writing – The plot reads like the fantasies of a ten year old: Hero defeats all challengers and proves he’s the toughest martial artist in the world. The script is no better. For example, in a flashback, teenage Frank Dux breaks into a home and picks up a samurai sword. The Japanese owner, Tanaka, discovers Frank with the sword in his hand. They have this exchange:

*Tanaka: One cannot take katana sword by stealing...it must be earned.*
*Teenage Frank: “You gonna call the cops?”*
*Tanaka: “Not if we make a deal.”*
*Teenage Frank: What kind of a deal?*

See what I mean? The dialogue is so flat and cliche that the script sounds like it was written in about two days.

**Why it’s so-bad-it’s-good**

(1) Unintentional humour – Reread the exchange between Frank and Tanaka. After Frank says “*What kind of a deal?”* there is a brief pause and a cut to Tanaka arching his eyebrows. The intention is a rip-off of Mr. Miyagi mentoring Daniel in “The Karate Kid” but in “Bloodsport” the clunky lines and poor delivery come across as some kind of invitation from a pedophile. Between the script and acting this film presents dozens of unintentionally laugh-out-loud scenes.

(2) Budget – With a budget under $1.5 million, production values are surprisingly high. A portion of the film was shot on location in Hong Kong and Kowloon and the chase scenes through the city streets are remarkable tight. As well, the “kumite” set looks exactly as you’d hope for in a bloody martial arts brawl: a huge open space ringed by screaming, gambling spectators, flaming torches and a manual scoreboard.

(3) Fight scenes – By post-Matrix standards they seem cliche but at the time this film was released the fight scenes were the best since Bruce Lee expired. Van Damme’s high-kicking, leg-splitting style is beautifully captured and the main villain, Chong Li, (played by martial arts legend Bolo Yeung) is the perfect brutish foil to Frank Dux’s elegant ballet-like moves.
Need inspiration? You can search the list of “Razzie” winners for some truly lousy films. A warning though: The Razzie movies are often so bad that there is NOTHING positive to recommend about them.

**Here are a few titles that you are welcome to review:**

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For inspiration, here’s a Rotten Tomatoes mini-review of “Batman & Robin” (1997)

Your reviews will be longer and follow the format above. This is just to put you in the mood...

You’ve got to see this one to see what $125m being spent at the rate of a million-a-minute looks like as it’s flushed down the can. The confluence of talent, where they’d been and where they’d go, from Arnold Schwarzenegger and George Clooney to director Joel Schumacher and writer Akiva Goldsman, makes this fascinatingly awful. The production values, like some neon-lit theme park, are astoundingly gauche, but that’s nothing compared to that script, whose clunky chorus comprises Arnie’s clunking out “comically” cold puns as Mr. Freeze.

Sources

Rotten Tomatoes