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Be blown (but not necessarily away) by 'Kaboom'

PUBLISHED ON APRIL 14, 2011 BY TOPE IN QUEER CINEMA, REVIEWS
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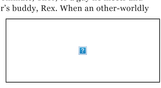
Kaboom

Directed by Gregg Araki

Written by Gregg Araki

2010, USA, France

Kaboom should be worse than it is. Much worse. 18-year-old Smith (an adequately engaging Thomas Dekker) is a film major who might be "a three or a four [out of six]" on the Kinsey scale as theorised by London (Juno Temple), a blonde nymphomaniac who becomes Smith's booty call, amongst other more shocking associations. Being at *that* age during *that* time in one's life, Smith spends a significant portion of his time fantasising about, experimenting with and fawning over every guy he encounters, from his thick-as-a-brick surfie roommate, Thor, to a guy he meets and does at a nude beach, to Thor's buddy, Rex. When an other-worldly redhead girl barfs on Smith's shoes at a party one night only to be later attacked and murdered by three masked assailants in what might or might not be a drug-fuelled dream, Smith's sexual coming of age is suddenly entangled in a tale of intrigue featuring vengeful witches, a vision of a bright red dumpster, estranged fathers and nihilistic cults, and a certain *something* that is of slightly more universal significance than Smith's getting his rocks off.



To reiterate, *Kaboom* should not work. That it manages to dodge such a fate is something of a minor miracle the more one thinks about it. What this film offers up is a hammily surreal end-of-the-world sci-fi murder-mystery sex comedy thriller in the trappings of an accomplished student film. This should partly explain why it is so damn surprising that American writer-director Gregg Araki's tenth feature transcends its inherent – and very likely intentional – silliness; that it actually works on some level. For a start, *Kaboom* is a tub of fun. Araki and his cast are clearly *enjoying* themselves, and the enjoyment is contagious. There is a heady, fevered quality to the filmmaking itself: the occasional use of voiceover narration, the eye-popping colour, the cheesy transitions and the low-budget effects complement the medium-budget DIY aesthetic, all of which proves unexpectedly endearing as a whole. What's more: the heavily tongue-in-cheek supernaturalism barely impedes the flow of proceedings, and similar can be said of the bountiful sex scenes. Add to that a soundtrack that might turn Sofia Coppola green and *Kaboom* turns out to be an oddly if not anachronistically decent picture. Worth noting, Haley Bennett puts in a great turn as Smith's drolly sardonic friend Stella who is herself plagued by the girlfriend from – quite literally – hell. Credit also to Chris Zylka for his somewhat fresh take on the quintessential surf bum.



Unfortunately it's not all pleasant surprises here. One such surprise is the film's being awarded the first ever Queer Palm, a prize concocted by an independent jury it should be noted, and one that John Cameron Mitchell's *Shortbus* should have probably been given. What *Kaboom* does for Queer Cinema or the LGBT cause is not entirely clear if at all it exists. Certainly, plaudits to Araki for the film's sexual liberalism and for his good-humoured yet honest portrayal of all manner of sex, praise which is really akin to applauding Oliver Stone for making a Left-leaning picture. Perhaps the awarders were so enamoured of the film's conviction that they simply had to give it something. Then there is the ending, which seems to take itself more seriously than it feels comfortable letting on. Exposition flies off the screen like a swarm of bad jokes from an early evening sitcom, none of which matters a great deal in the grand scheme of things. Perhaps it can simply be seen as a cathartic, tongue-*through*-cheek mishmash of all the film's possible inspirations from *Donnie Darko* to David Lynch, to bad TV shows and films that spew plot points all over one's shoes.



At the end of the day (and world) *Kaboom* shouldn't work, and maybe it doesn't, but it's an amusing time at the movies nonetheless. Just sit back and let it do all the work.

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A 23 year old Nigerian Australian - Sydney-based medical student , film enthusiast and fledgling writer- Also a soccer fan and filmmaker in-utero

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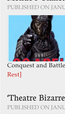
PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 29, 2012 BY JOSH SPIEGEL



The Brave Little Toaster Directed by Jerry Rees Written by Jerry Rees and Joe Ranft Starring Deanna Oliver, Jon Lovitz, Thurl Ravenscroft Originality is so rare these days that we latch onto anything that doesn't smell of being laughably, obviously … [Read the Rest]

Mousterpiece Cinema, Episode 30: 'The Brave Little Toaster'

PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 28, 2012 BY JOSH SPIEGEL



This week on Mousterpiece Cinema, Josh and Michael ask the important question: who plays with appliances as a child? This and other burning questions arise as they discuss The Brave Little Toaster, an indie animated film Walt Disney Pictures snatched … [Read the Rest]

Shaw Brothers Saturdays: 'All Men Are Brothers' proves to be a satisfying conclusion

PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 28, 2012 BY EDGAR CHAPUT



All Men Are Brothers Directed by Chang Cheh Written by Chang Cheh and Kuang Ni Hong Kong, 1975 In 1972, The Water Margin exploded onto the Hong Kong cinema scene, courtesy of acclaimed director Chang Cheh, an eclectic cast and … [Read the Rest]

'The Wicker Tree' aims big, but loses the thread early on

PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 28, 2012 BY MARK YOUNG

The Wicker Tree Written by Robin Hardy Directed by Robin Hardy UK, 2011 Fans of British writer/director Robin Hardy's 1973 film The Wicker Man will likely be nonplussed by his newest effort The Wicker Tree. Neither a sequel to nor … [Read the Rest]

The Sound On Sight Twitter Animation Debate

PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 28, 2012 BY RICKY

Ricky D accidentally ignited a day-long Twitter debate about Animation and specifically whether Steven Spielberg's The Adventures of Tintin is an animated movie or not, when he was tweeting related to his article about the biggest Oscar snubs. Since the … [Read the Rest]

Fringe Ep. 4.10, "Forced Perspective": Treads water instead of gearing up

PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 27, 2012 BY KATE KULZICK

Fringe Review, Season 4, Episode 10: "Forced Perspective" Written by Ethan Gross Directed by David Solomon Airs Fridays at 9pm (ET) on Fox This week, on Fringe: The Newnivrerse catches up, re:Observers, Olivia and Nina bond, and Emily can see … [Read the Rest]

Sound On Sight Podcast Rewind: Episode #63 – Paul Newman Special

PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 27, 2012 BY RICKY



Paul Newman is without a doubt my favorite actor of all time. Today is his birthday and so I figured it would be fun to spotlight one of our older podcasts. In episode 63 of the Sound On Sight podcast … [Read the Rest]

Mondo's 'Planet of the Apes' Poster Series

PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 27, 2012 BY RICKY



Mondo has partnered with Sideshow Collectibles and a handful of notable poster artists to produce a set of posters for each of the classic Planet of the Apes Films (Planet, Beneath, Escape, Conquest and Battle). The five prints went on … [Read the Rest]

'Theatre Bizarre' resurrects the horror omnibus

PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 27, 2012 BY MARK PENNY

The Theatre Bizarre Directed by Richard Stanley, Buddy Giovinazzo, Douglas Buck, Karim Hussain, David Gregory, Tom Savini and Jeremy Kasten USA / France, 2011 A horror anthology in seven parts, The Theatre Bizarre is a throwback to the tradition of the port-manteaux … [Read the Rest]

Video Of The Day: Robin Hardy in Conversation with Richard Stanley at the 2011 Fantasia Film Festival

PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 27, 2012 BY RICKY

Last year The 15th annual Fantasia Film Festival unleashed one of it's biggest and best slates to date. Among its 114-film lineup were gala world premieres of Robin Hardy's long-awaited The Wicker Tree – a film which Sound On Sight's … [Read the Rest]

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