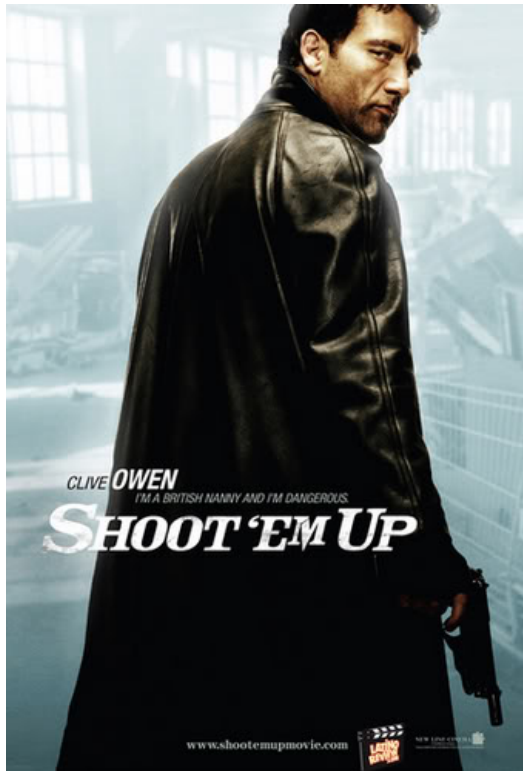


Movie Review: Shoot 'Em Up

Written by {ga=mitch}

Wednesday, September 12 2007 7:00 PM -

We've got a lot of new readers here at TCF, and for those that may only know Mitch for his "Random Thoughts" Browns column ... Mitch reviews all new relevant movies for our front page as well, and by clicking his name you can access the vast body of work he's done for us here. His latest review is of recent release "Shoot 'Em Up", starring two of Hollywood's hottest actors, Clive Owen and Paul Giamatti. How many footballs did it get from Mitch? Come on in and find out ...



"Exquisite Garbage". That is the best phrase I can think of to describe what could be called a cross between "Desperado", "Snakes on a Plane", and any Bugs Bunny cartoon prior to the politically correct practice of censoring the hell out of them so kids don't see Daffy Duck getting his bill shot off fifteen times in a five minute show.

Clive Owen and Paul Giamatti have an absolute blast going so far over the top that they are almost in orbit in this short (80 minute), bloody, gross, hilarious, cringe-inducing homage to John Woo type action films. Subtlety is not something employed at any point by writer-director Michael Davis, a man previously known for...well, pretty much nothing other than a 2003 horror bomb called "Monster Man".

As mentioned, the film is only 80 minutes long, and there are guns firing during

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about 70 of them. Davis has no time for such film luxuries as plot, nuance, character development, or back stories. All you need to know is that a bunch of bad guys are out to kill a newborn baby, and Owen's character, known only as Smith, doesn't want them to succeed. But there is no deep meaning behind his desire to save the baby. He was just in the wrong place at the right time when the baby was born to his soon-to-be doomed mother, so since he's already killed about twenty people in the first five minutes, he might as well just hang around to see how it ends up. And by the way, his body count ends up making Jack Bauer look like a pacifist in comparison.

Giamatti plays the appropriately named Hertz, a contract killer who, in the style of so many action/adventure flicks, fancies himself as some kind of genius. But he is much more sardonic and world weary than Alan Rickman's Hans Gruber from "Die Hard", or any megalomaniacal James Bond villain. His eye rolls are classic as Smith keeps cutting through Hertz's minions with Schwarzenegger-esque ease, and his exasperation with life is quite amusing during several killitus-interruptus phone calls from his dear wife.

Monica Bellucci is along for the ride in a role that is about as close to a Polar Opposite as one could get from her character of Mary Magdalene in "The Passion of the Christ". A prostitute that is an acquaintance of Smith, she gets drug into the middle of it because Smith needs to find a source of food for the baby, and Bellucci's character Donna just happens to be lactating...leading to a scene that registers a 10-point-10 on the "Yuck Scale" when Smith first breaks in and disrupts her with a diaper wearing john.

Owen seems to have a lot of fun in this role, using it as a bit of a send-up to him not getting the role of James Bond, as had been earlier rumored. A good decision, as far as I'm concerned. Daniel Craig is great in the role, but more so, Owen is too good of an actor to be pigeon-holed into the 007 tuxedo. Here, he is the doppelganger of Bond...a bad-assed good guy who is really, really good at killing people. Davis employs a stupid plot device of having Smith always eating carrots: They add to the wacky Bugs Bunny references, and are useful in killing bad guys in disgusting ways on those few instances when Smith isn't armed liked the 29th Infantry Brigade. It's a stunt that would fall completely flat with most

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actors, but Owen is so good that he can actually make it work with his droll British accented flat delivery.

In fact, Owen shows some comedic chops that I had previously not seen from him. While his character is almost identical to the one he played in "Sin City" (another movie Davis has borrowed heavily from), Owen injects it with a lot more wry humor and groan inducing puns. I would compare it to Bruce Willis' John McLane, but Owen does it without the smirk or the winks to the camera. "You know what I hate", becomes almost a catch-phrase for the movie as Smith hates pretty much everything (except dogs), and when he says the line, you know something wild is about to happen, as when he exhibits a case of road-rage normally reserved for extras in a Mad Max movie.

It is all done in a very stylish manner. The shoot-outs are expertly choreographed and filmed, and the stunts, while ludicrous in the logistics, are nonetheless breathtaking to watch. While most of the film pokes loving fun at the whole action-adventure genre, it never goes too far into the realm of parody...a fatal flaw seen in "Snakes On a Plane";.

Perhaps Davis has created a brand new genre; the action-adventure-comedy-thriller, as I laughed more (intentionally) at this movie than I have any recent Adam Sandler crapfest.

If so, it is definitely not for everyone. And by that, I mean it's probably not for anyone possessing XX chromosomes, as my wife is still

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regretting her choice to accompany me to see this, thinking she'd love it just because Clive was in it. Gratuitous gross violence, gratuitous sex, and gratuitous stereotypes make this an unapologetically guy movie...probably best enjoyed by the types that tune in to pro wrestling.

For me...it's a movie I could have easily hated as much as I did "[Smokin' Aces](#)"...for the exact same reasons. But Michael Davis has a lot more going for him, especially in the form of a great cast, with actors like Owen, Giamatti, and Bellucci giving their best, instead of doing what so many actors would do in such a cheesy film and just mail in their performances (that would be you, Jeremy Piven).

For that reason, I'll give the film a rating of Bill Nelsen (2 ½ footballs). A Guilty Pleasure if I've ever seen one.