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"Michael Adams's book is great fun! No one intends to make a truly bad movie, but when they do, Michael Adams will be there to watch it...and make it entertaining!" —John Landis, director of *Trading Places* and *The Blues Brothers*

In *Showgirls, Teen Wolves, and Astro Zombies*, film critic Michael Adams embarks on a year-long odyssey to discover the worst movie ever made, which *Mystery Science Theater 3000* star, writer, and director Kevin Murphy calls "disturbingly comprehensive, joyously critical, and the best of its kind." From all-time cult classics such as *Reefer Madness* and *Plan 9 from Outer Space* to new entries to the pantheon such as *Gigli* and *Baby Geniuses*, no genre, star, or director is safe from Adams's acerbic wit and hilarious observations. In the vein of A.J. Jacobs's New York Times bestselling book *The Know-It-All*, and with the snarky sarcasm of television's *Mystery Science Theater 3000* and *The Soup*, *Showgirls, Teen Wolves, and Astro Zombies* leaves no stone unturned. With a foreword by cult director George A. Romero (*Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead*).

Showgirls, Teen Wolves, and Astro Zombies: A Film Critic's Year-Long Quest to Find the Worst Movie Ever Made Details

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From Reader Review Showgirls, Teen Wolves, and Astro Zombies: A Film Critic's Year-Long Quest to Find the Worst Movie Ever Made for online ebook

Cathy says

Super-fun. Adams really likes movies and people who make movies, so he approaches his project with a lot of good will. And because he's a film journalist, he's able to get people to talk to him about their movies. There is also much musing about what makes a movie bad, what counts as a "movie," film history, and so forth. It's a lot of fun discovering the "worst-movie" picks of people like John Waters and David Sedaris. I've read quite a bit about weird, bad, and "psychotronic" film -- and even so, there were movies here I hadn't heard of.

I could have done with a little less about his personal life -- he's trying to do this in the format of one of those "I spent a year doing some crazy thing" books and it kind of clashes with the film orientation of his project, because watching bad movies is not something that inflects your daily life the way that trying to obey the Old Testament or what have you does.

Derek says

Australian movie critic Michael Adams did what few cinephiles have attempted to do: to discover the worst movie ever made. In order to do so, he resolved to watch an average of one "bad" movie each day after spending time compiling a comprehensive list of bad movies from all over the internet. He uses a bingo machine to randomly select his movies each week; the movies are grouped into categories in different ways, including content, filmmaker, starring actors, or production companies. He developed a rating system on which each movie can be ranked as he chronicles his quest to find the lowest score. Adams fills the account of his year with pithy statements about many of the movies as well as tidbits of trivia about the people who made them; he also tells about his work as a movie critic (in 2007, no less, a great year for movies) and some details from his personal life along the way. Adams' anecdotes are entertaining and illuminating, and it is fun to see how his impressions of bad movies change as he watches more of them; his encounters with various figures in the bad movie industry (both critics and filmmakers alike) also provide a lot of chuckles. If you're a fan of movies at all, good or bad, this is a great read, but even movie neophytes will find enough entertainment here to make it worth the quick and light read.

Chad Byrnes says

I dare anyone to find a more entertaining book about the artistry of awful films. The art of analyzing horrible movies is not as simple as you think. What constitutes shit to one person might be gold to another. However, I don't think a whole lot of people would protest what's good or bad with the films author and film reviewer Michael Adams researched. They're all bad. Real bad. Basically, every movie he analyzes (some of these films don't require much analysis) are all pretty much bottom of the barrel shit.

Still, other than rock and roll and literature, bad films is a definite passion of mine. A passion I've fed like a slimy rat in the basement since my teenage years (when I first saw the brilliant shitfest called "Q: The Winged Serpent.")

And, yes, while James Joyce might have had his archaic longings for a late nineteenth century Dublin, or

Fitzgerald longed for the old singsong days in Princeton, I yearn for the lost golden years of the 80's when I could walk into my local video store and randomly pick up such luminary films as "Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things" or "I Drink Your Blood," or have you forgotten, "Mommie Dearest," the masterpiece biopic of Joan Crawford in which a ghoulish Fey Dunaway beats her daughter with wire hangers and cleaning supplies. Such films opened my eyes to the psychosis of life. Yes, there are crazy fucking people out there and some of them are writers and directors... and even actors! This was a revelation I still hold very dear to my heart.

Anyway, I have read several books about bad movies, but none of those writers have the comical and sardonic chops of writer, Michael Adams, who set out to discover the worst film of all time in one month. Yes, he trolled ebay and garage sales and every other vendor you can think of to find these pieces of crap. And along the way he gives us small descriptions of these films, their history, the filmmakers behind them (including Ed Wood) and what constitutes their badness and basically, their hilarity. Anyway, it's a funny fucking book. Read it.

My favorite chapter was definitely about hot actresses in the 80s who were married to lecherous old men that made weird films about incest. Two such actresses are Pia Zadora, who was married to an Israeli tycoon who basically bought her a Golden Globe for "Best New Actress" for one of the most discomfoting films I've ever encountered, called "Butterfly," about a hot farmer's daughter and her relationship with her... ahem... father. Yuck! The second star in this category is definitely Bo Derek whose scuzzy older husband directed her in a slew of crap movies that all had the underlying theme of incest. These films must be seen to be believed. And yes, I've seen them all. And yes, I said Yuck!

Thanks to Michael Adams however I have a list of horrible, wonderful shit to see! Adams' hilarious accounts of such movies as Vanilla Ice's "Cool As Ice," John Travolta's "Perfect," and other such steaming turds just make me smile. Hopefully they will for you too.

Jill Hutchinson says

You have to be a fan of bad movies (which I am) to appreciate this funny, irreverent book of the author's search for the worst movie ever made.....not the usual "so bad they are good" such as "Plan 9 From Outer Space" by the beloved Ed Wood, but the "so bad they are bad". These are films that are almost beyond belief in their ineptness....terrible acting,, no comprehensible story line, hysterical "special effects". look like they were filmed in your grandmother's rec room on a telephone, and the list goes on. The author, who is an Australian film critic, ponders how they ever were released or why they were even made.

His quest was to watch one bad film a day for a year and he searched data bases, talked to directors and other writers to compile his list. He admits that by the end of the year, he was almost reduced to a gibbering idiot but he indeed decided on the worst of the worst, a film of which the majority of the public is unfamiliar. This is a must-read for the bad film fanatic but be advised that it contains some pretty raw language which might offend.

Jayne Lamb says

The only thing I like better than reading about film is reading about BAD film. Michael Adams' does a stellar (if slightly dangerous) job in watching at least one bad film every day for a year in order to determine the answer to one of life's great puzzles; what IS the worst film ever made? Aside from the dud movies themselves, Adams also writes about film in general, film history, chats to some cinema greats and reminds us to be grateful for the patience of partners/husbands/ wives.(Maybe I should get Nat to read this.) A great read, and surely not the last word on the subject.

Jeff Anderson says

A weird hybrid that the author did not completely pull off. It's not a guide to bad movies Adams watched in a one year period, and some movies are skimmed over as he races to watch a bad movie everyday, but as a memoir it's top heavy with descriptions of movies he did watch and little about the effects this had on his wife and 18-month old daughter. He is funny at times and the list of movies he watched is fascinating in itself but I think this is a book that doesn't know what it wants to be. In the acknowledgements page Adams says his editor helped him pare this book down from a telephone book size to its current length. I realize memoirs have a general length of 300 pages or so. I doubt that is codified anywhere but it seems to be a rule generally followed. But it harms here as we seem to be missing more personal stories of how his family reacted to all of this. He says his wife was very supportive, but halfway through the year she loses her job. Later she finds employment, but we learn of her job loss and then blithely move on to the next rotten celluloid fiasco. WTF? It is neither hot nor cold, it is tepid and not very appealing. I would like to have read some of his wife's thoughts on all of this as well. It was fun to read but I did feel its lack all through. We certainly don't need another oversized guide-book to these movies and I would have liked less movies and more personal here. But that's just me.

P. Aaron Potter says

This was an interesting read, in an episodic sort of way. While the author's commentary on specific films and auteurs were often amusing and enlightening (and I was both shocked and horrified to find how many of them I'd seen myself), there was never any particular conclusion. I kept anticipating some sort of 'summing up' of either the experience or the author's insights into film. Something, perhaps, could have been made of the fact that many critics find movies like Titanic or Star Wars episode I or (my personal bogeyman) Forrest Gump to be just as awful as Corpse Grinders 2. But nothing was made of it, leaving all the real mental work up to the audience. Again, it made for interesting discussion with my wife, but I'm not sure how well it worked as a book. More like a blog with covers.

Alex Bledsoe says

As a longtime MST3K fan, I have a real affection for bad movies, the more sincere the better (stuff like "Sharknado," which is deliberately made to be bad, is just insulting). This is a fun book, weaving in just enough of the author's life to make you feel like you're taking his year-long journey with him. He writes about the individual films very well and without condescension or smugness. Where he can, he talks to the people who produced them, which I'm not sure I'd have the nerve to do. If you enjoy "list" books, and/or bad movies, then this is well worth your time.

Renee says

A fun look at all the terrible movies we love. I have a whole watch list now from this book.

Kurt says

This is a well-written book for what it is, but by 3/4 of the way in, I was so offended by the central premise that I just skimmed the rest of the chapters to see if I recognized any movie titles. The book is an overview of the author's self-imposed quest to watch a bad movie every day for a year in an attempt to find the worst movie ever made. This is on top of his work obligations as a movie critic and his family obligations as a husband and the father of a young girl. I generally like books by authors who give themselves arbitrary quests (A.J. Jacobs, Barbara Ehrenreich, Ted Conover), but in other books, the quest gives the authors room to write about something meaningful, about what they learn about themselves or what larger societal issues are illuminated by their tasks. Adams, though, just writes about bad movies. A little about his career development along the way, a little about vacations he takes, a little about other people's favorite bad movies (to his credit, he does contact a number of surprising people for interviews). But he never (as far as I read) gets into why people love bad movies, just that they do, and the closest he gets to a societal observation is noticing that a lot of his older movies are racist and sexist. Mostly, he just writes a paragraph or two about a lot of different movies, and there are only so many ways that he can write "Bad acting, bad dialogue, bad lighting, bad direction" before it all sounds the same. I was also completely offended by the way he never explored the impact on his family of this solitary quest (he watches almost every movie alone), or what his wife thought about him watching gruesome rapes and murders on a laptop while she slept next to him in bed (and Adams is not one to let a genital mutilation go without reference, making this book pretty vile because of the overwhelming vileness of many of the movies themselves). This is a decent summary of a book, but it centers on a self-centered, pointless, destructive quest, and I will not support it by recommending it to anyone.

Daria says

An engaging read, because Michael Adams is a man who knows how to love a bad movie while still knowing it's a bad movie.

The only real problem with the book is the number of films he watches (compared to the length of the book). Given he spent a year watching bad films (and talking to professionals about them), of course there's a lot to cover. But sometimes it feels like his commentary on a film is just getting going when it's time to switch to something else. Some movies even get a few-word description that cries out for more detail that never comes.

The ideal presentation of this book would be to be able to watch the clips as Adams talks about them - of course, as he wrote it, this was a limitation of technology and money, not his witty writing ability.

Andrew says

Not a bad book but you can see that this is effectively a blog turned into a book. Adams has some interesting and at times funny things to say about the films he watched, however the frequent interpolation of personal life moments between the film critiques does little to improve the interest in the movies and his comments about them. There were some elements within the book that worked quite well and Adams does have the capacity to deliver enough content to make a bad film fan consider him worthy of an audience. I did however have an issue with his minimal reference to the pioneers of bad movie criticism, the Medveds, plus he missed out on two of the best worst auteurs of the genre, Ray Dennis Steckler and Herschell Lewis.

A solid read but ultimately you feel like this is the Kon-Tiki World Discovery tour of Z-Grade flicks, rushing too fast past through the films whilst being regaled with personal anecdotes instead of a deeper insight into the films.

Ed says

Michael Adams watched one or more bad movies every day for a solid year as an experiment/endurance test. It's almost something Morgan Spurlock would try except there's no real social comment to be made. He watched everything from the Hollywood shit you can imagine (Ishtar, Batman & Robin, Superman IV, Jaws The Revenge) to stuff on VHS that was barely feature length and often had the boom mike showing. Adams also interviews various filmmakers for their picks, which adds to his growing list. It's because of the wide range of movies that the book is a kind of mixed bag. As it went on, I got as weary as he did and some of the movies sounded horrible not just because they were bad. Adams draws the distinctions we all do between so-bad-it's-good to just bad to offensively bad. I'm relieved that of the 400 plus movies watched, I've only seen about 15-20 and I aim to keep it that way. I do have to say that the inclusion of the 1976 King Kong is simply wrong wrong wrong wrong wrong. This version is better than the original and much better than the Peter Jackson. So Adams has his head up his ass on that one point. King King Lives? Fine. A bad movie. Sorry, I don't have a blog and I'm tired of that movie being shat upon. But overall, I admire Adams for putting himself through this and providing a thoughtful analysis of why certain movies don't work. A really cool idea reasonably well done.

Luke says

If you don't enjoy crappy movies you probably won't enjoy this book. Luckily, I find a lot of appeal in fuckawfulness, so this is right up my alley. If you're one of those people who owns those 50-film box sets, this is pretty much tailor-made for you. Thankfully, it's not all out-of-copyright stuff reviewed, and modern crapola has an equal run. I mean, if the book hadn't included *Gigli* it would've failed at the first hurdle, right?

(Side-note: I know someone who was in *Leonard: Part VI*, so I did particularly enjoy seeing that get a guernsey.)

Some other GR reviews appear to take issue with Adams for not beating himself up over the quality of the dreck watched, which would lead me to believe they hadn't actually read the book. Watching a year's worth of bad movies is unquestionably displayed as a bit of a shit idea, albeit one that results in moments of Stockholm Syndrome happiness. The book isn't meant to be a searing critique of *why* bad movies are made; it's an example of what it's like to take a hobby to its furthest extent.

No, it's not a deeply sociological work, but it never sets out to be. It's a dude watching some terrible shit, making notes and then turning it into a book that other people (who also enjoy watching terrible shit, which FUNNILY ENOUGH includes people who make *good* movies) will enjoy. It's not rocket science, but neither is making a scarum flick.

I laughed, I recognised movies that I've seen (and am equally weirded by the fact that *Manos* is currently being **restored**) and I felt pretty positively towards the author, who seems to find the same stuff funny as I do. It induced enough laughter and YouTube hunting to make it well worth the effort. Anyone with a healthy respect for cinema's dodginess will enjoy it.

(As an aside: *The King of Marvin Gardens* takes my pick for worst film and it's not listed here. You know when you intermittently doze through an in-flight film and it's as if the movie is mocking you by being the longest thing ever? That, and BRUCE DERN'S TEETH. The fact that Scatman Crothers, Jack Nicholson, Ellen Burstyn and the cinematography of László Kovács - apparently shooting through a vaseline lens the whole time - can't save it is proof of its collapsing-star suckage. IMDB loves it though, but screw those guys.)

Brett says

This is one of those types of books where an author sets up a quest of some kind and seeks to fulfill it, not unlike the Year of Living Biblically and other like-minded stunt books or movies. The set-up in Michael Adams' book is that he will watch at least one bad movie per day for a year in an effort to discover the worst movie ever made.

Of course, we all know that rating a movie as the "worst ever made" is a pretty subjective judgment, so in order for this book to be worthwhile, it had better be a pretty fun journey though the year, since we know there won't be much validity in the final result. Luckily, Adams is a funny and observant writer, and he peppers his discussion of bad films with anecdotes from his personal life, his job struggles, his relationship with his wife and child, and other bits of insight. Nothing about this book is world-changing, but if you have a soft spot for bad cinema, you will find yourself nodding along with Adams as he describes various terrible movies and tries to find redeeming features in them.

On the other hand, if you don't have much stomach for bad movies, I don't imagine there is much here for you. If you never spent a Saturday afternoon watching MST3K (or even better, giving some bad movie the MST3K treatment with your friends), then maybe avoid this one. But if you've sat through *Manos: The Hands of Fate* on more than one occasion, then this book is for you.
