Chris Windsor's

Big Meat Eater

Big Meat Eater's producer and director, Laurence Keane and Chris Windsor, wandered around this year's Festival of Festivals hypnotizing their $150,000 horror science-fiction, musical comedy as a bad movie - which is a fairly bright move, since the cult of the bad movie is growing like the prettiest purple fungus I found on my front lawn when I was 11.

But 'bad movie' isn't strictly what Big Meat Eater is, though it gets its moments, that's an enjoyable only because of the sheer enormity and mind-boggling unbelievability of its ineptitude. Plan 9 From Outer Space, Asteroids and The Oscar come to mind, movies that screw up so badly that watching them can induce that hormonal imbalance known and loved by mystery through the ages.

But Big Meat Eater does it deliberately and thereby lifts itself into a class with Detour, Night of the Living Dead, Andy Warhol's Frankenstein, Little Shop of Horrors, Hollywood Boulevard, Eclator Girls in Bondage, Private Parts, Eating Raoul (both from Paul Bartel, and, of course, Rocky Horror).

It's a class without a name. Let's give it one. Zoned Movies - in honour of Dick Miller's classic line in the silent scene: 'The Invader in Death Never Rests:' "I don't understand my mind must be reazoned," and in honour of Forbidden Zone, the genre undisputed master-piece-to-date. It can be defined as a serious and bizarre sensibility applied to the materials of low culture - sex, horror, rock 'n roll, gore, bad jokes and plot holes, and usually low budgets. It isn't camp. Camp is summing: laugh at it, as opposed to, laugh with it.

Big Meat Eater is, as I said, the first Canadian Zoned movie. It is set in Burquitlam B.C., a small town with a deep faith in appliances and a credit card that "The Future Belongs To The Future." The story, for what it's worth, begins when Abdullah, the singing psychopath, murders the mayor and stash's his body in Bob Sanderson's butcher shop. Bob is a civic booster who wants the town to adopt its new universal language: Aranaco. The town is already multi-lingual.) But the mayor's body is revived by aliens who want the supply of new appliances can get Wenzinski's family to move and besides unknown to them all, their cockney-accented teenage son is about to stumble on and use the Balonium for his own devious purposes.

And this is where it all falls apart, justifying to a degree Windsor and Keane's claim to its being a 'bad movie.' As a bad movie, though, it's a flop. The derelict has already been laid in and the total disintegration of the plots only reduces it somewhat, allowing little droplets of boredom to creep in around the edges during the final third.

By this time, though, Big Meat Eater has built up a lot of goodwill with lots of silly, spritzy, soporific humour, musical numbers, good comic acting and tacky special effects all shot in one day for a total cost of $500.

It has also given us, to its undying credit, Big Miller, the Alberta-based jazzman, in the role of Abdullah, the singing psychopath. Big Miller is a giant ball of a man, master of all, one of the things the "nigger stare" - a look of menace as thoroughly black as the blues, but fallen into paralysing disfavour since the 60s. (Chuck Berry used to pull it on stage occasionally. I don't know if he still does)

He also has the show's two best songs: "Bagdad Boogie," which he throws in. An almanac he written that Alderman Sonny the Wessel into the furnace for interrupting (or maybe for wanting the heat turned down) and the title song, belted out in a deep, relentlessly sexy voice to a pair of very turned on-middle-aged housewives, while Miller Abdullah mauls a mound of raw meat.

Whether Zoned movies are your idea of a good time, or not, Big Miller alone makes Big Meat Eater worth seeing. And besides, isn't it cheering to know there's a New spirit abroad in the land? Pass the drugs, Mother.

Andrew Dowler