David Cronenberg's

The Parasite Murders


“Sex is the invention of a clever venereal disease.”

Well, I really have bad taste. I liked it. I know you’re going to say I’m campy and cliquey and queer, but I did like it in my own weird campy way. Because it goes so far, it’s so funny-scary awful, so — all those dreams you wouldn’t tell anybody, and I mean anybody, about, — all there in front of you, that you’ve got to be loose, oh yes, very loose indeed, to enjoy this film.

And after all people, what’s there to be scared of? Is there really somebody out there who doesn’t dream great big colourful eccentric mindboggling blush-making dreams? Once in a while anyway? Ask your favorite psychiatrist. And do you really want Marshall Delaney (I refer to his now famous piece in the back pages of Saturday Night entitled “You should know how bad this film is. After all, you paid for it”) to tell you your creepo dreams are in bad taste?

I’m sure they are. I hardly ever have a tasteful dream, to be sure. And talking to David Cronenberg, the crazy truthful thing is, this film did come from that special nowhere place where all the wires cross in the back of the mind; from dreamland. True. He simply dreamt it up.

Interestingly, he had another dream while he was making it — a rather intriguing one in which an audience contracted a disease from a film. In the dream he saw this happening, and realized that those affected were feeling antagonistic to those as yet unaffected. The disease itself made people age exceedingly rapidly. Not horribly, just quickly. Listening to him my flesh began to crawl with the delightful anticipation of yet another creepy ghoulish psycho-masochistic squirming film from out of the back of Cronenberg’s head.

So what is the movie about? Well, in a beautifully stated intro we find ourselves in an apartment complex complete unto itself. Called Starliner, it is advertised with all its facilities, as a world of its own, exclusive and separate. Just the kind of place I find frightening, and advertised, as real complexes like this are, with what seems to me the epitome of bad taste. But it takes all kinds.

All the privileged people living there are unaware that a strange, and I mean really strange, bug is loose in the building. Cronenberg calls it a ‘bug’ but in fact it looks like a cross between a slug, leech and a particularly offensive penis. Don’t read on if you’re squeamish, because I’m about to tell you it is passed by mouth, as well as creeps, squeezes, slides, plops and oozes toward its various victims.

Now, from all the war films I’ve seen, and all the bloody bashes and bonks that TV and the action genre movies perpetrate on my frail interior, I have at last been purged. Because this film has blood in such gobs and slatherings, such dribbles, splashes and smears, that finally, Peckinpah notwithstanding, I am freed of ever getting zapped by some smart-aleck’s catsup bottle drama again. Or maybe, anyhow. If the effect wears off, I may need another dose, Dr. Cronenberg.

Ivan Reitman produced. No doubt the thought I had when I saw this film, that it would make a good double-bill with his Cannibal Girls, was in his mind before the film was ever finished, or maybe before it was even begun? Perhaps. But it might interest you to learn that when Cronenberg first showed him the script he didn’t want anything to do with it because he found it so disgusting. And really, Cannibal Girls, buzzier-horror warning and manmeat stew and all, is like child’s play compared to the depths of depravity Parasites discloses.

The narrative flow is reasonably clear, the photography by Robert Saad competent and straightforward, and the acting medium-good to really-ok, with Joe Silver as usual stealing the kudos.

Joe Blasco came up for the love of the business: from California, where he makes his ‘living doing things like makeup for the Lawrence Welk show (talk about horror...) and he worked some wonders. To dumbfound other special effects men, he even has Alan Migicovsky,
It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time


When you combine backing from David Perlmutter with Quadrant Productions and director John Trent it means a determined attempt is being made to make money with a movie. And the result in this case is a product that is aimed exclusively at the drive-ins, for the young, for the brave, for the silly people who like movies that are in bad taste and don’t care what Delaney thinks.

This is popcorn, not fruitcake, and no one ever said it was good for you. So go, but be warned, you may have quite a time.

Natalie Edwards

Or do we have a style all our own? Looking back over what could rather kindly be called the Canadian comedies of the recent past, we see that the embarrassed shrugster with which we greet their memory is almost the best indication of their type. Embarrassment, mortification and mild dirt, mixed with meagre chaos, have in the end created a recipe that cannot fail (and has not so far) to produce a mediocre, rather mirthless comedy. Another Smith for Paradise? The Rainbow Boys? Only God Knows? Even Why Rock the Boat?, a rather unusually successful chuckle-headed film, finds the mockery of man of modest amusement only.

In It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time a desperate attempt has been made to avoid the merriment of muttered and blush, and create hearty ho-ho’s out of a lovely rich old English mixture of bathroom, bowel and bed gimmick. Keep it in mind when you raise up his body with a jerk in the end created a recipe that cannot fail (and has not so far) to produce a mediocre, rather mirthless comedy. Another Smith for Paradise? The Rainbow Boys? Only God Knows? Even Why Rock the Boat?, a rather unusually successful chuckle-headed film, finds the mockery of man of modest amusement only.

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