

# Movie Review

## '1969' tells pathetic story of college students

By RICHARD SMITH  
Staff Writer

We lived 1969; now we can go see the movie. And if that sounds trite, it's only an honest response to 1969, a trite film if ever there was one.

Though 1969 was only 20 years ago, and we are still living the consequences of the '60s, writer-director Ernest Thompson moves the year so far away from us that the events in the film look like they could have happened during the Stone Age. Thompson makes the film seem removed and distant. It has no vitality and nothing to say to us here in 1989.

The story concerns two college students, Scotty and Ralph (Kiefer Sutherland and Robert Downey Jr. respectively), who have gone to college to avoid the draft. How-

ever, Ralph is more intent on dabbling with the latest drugs than doing his homework, and flunks out, thus making himself eligible for the draft. Scotty's brother Alden, meanwhile, with whom he does not exactly share a cordial relationship even though Alden has given Scotty his car, has already enlisted and is already missing in action.

The difficulty is in pinning down Scotty's and Ralph's characters. Ralph does drugs and Scotty is dying to get laid before he's 20. These things seem to matter more to them than the war or even their relationships with their parents. Everyone over the age of 30 walks around in this film with pained expressions on their faces, no one more than Bruce Dern, Scotty's father. Why are they all

so miserable? Probably because they just read the script.

There are things to like: a moving scene when Alden's mother shouts across the highway to her departing son, "Don't die," and a scene showing Scotty passing Vietnam-bound troops on his way to Canada to avoid the draft.

But it's not enough. Mostly it's just 60s music and a plethora of unnecessary images of the decade thrown in for the hell of it. Scotty, completely by chance, runs into a nudist colony on the beach; a small protest rally at school turns inexplicably violent; leading figures of the decade are discussed in meaningless conversations (Scotty's "Cool Cats" include The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Kurt Vonnegut and the Kennedys); a poster from "The

Graduate" on Scotty's wall, a theater showing "Easy Rider" and "True Grit," which only give the audience examples by which to measure the nonsense they are watching.

It emerges through all this junk that director Thompson, through Scotty, is asking the question, "What is freedom?" At first, his answer is naive and pathetic: hitchhiking, having a good time, getting laid, etc. But by the end of the movie, when his best friend has been arrested for trying to steal his draft papers from the town hall, when his brother has been located and found dead, when he has seen his father playing around with his best friend's mother, when he finally gets laid, Scotty's staggering reply to Thompson's question is that

freedom means you can disagree. What a realization! What profundity! What garbage!

"1969" should have had something to say. Student radicalism, dodging the draft, the impact of the loss of a brother and a son — all of these issues are valid and have dramatic possibilities, but you can be forgiven for thinking otherwise while watching this film. Thompson has chosen a ludicrous framework for it all, with unbelievable characters for whom there can be little sympathy. Above all, "1969" lacks credibility. It is a pathetic, inconsequential film.

1969 is showing at Willowdale in Durham at 1, 3 and 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday and nightly at 7:20 and 9:20.

## Bad movies: Watch them, but don't tell your friends

By ANDREW LAWLER  
Staff Writer

The Oscars have come and gone, celebrating the best in movies. Yet each year some of the most enjoyable movies are sadly ignored just because they have no class. Movies that aim for little more than fun are usually dismissed by the critics and often flop because of this. Yet the VCR allows us to resurrect these films and revel in their silliness. Here's a list of guilty

pleasures made for staying home with some pals and having fun.

1. "Bachelor Party"  
"Bachelor Party" is the quintessential overdosing donkey movie. Tom Hanks is getting married and his pals (Adrian Zmed and Michael Dudikoff of "American Ninja" fame) throw him a raucous, raunchy bachelor party complete "with chicks and guns and fire trucks." This is a tasteless romp chock-full of intoxicant and pharmaceutical irresponsibility. It is a classic party movie.

2. "Big Trouble in Little China"  
Imagine if John Wayne had stumbled into a kung-fu movie. This hilarious satire of adventure flicks stars Kurt Russell as a trucker who stumbles into a mess of magic and martial arts in San Francisco's Chinatown. Great characters and special effects make this well worth renting. This film is not only funny, but is without question the best karate movie since "Enter the Dragon." The fights are wonders to watch and are free from gore.

3. "Weird Science"  
Two genius kids create Kelly Le

Brock (honest!) and are taken on the ride of their lives. Not only do they get to hang around with Le Brock, but they drive fast cars, turn bullies into slugs and save their true loves from intergalactic bad guys in front of the entire school. This is a brilliant movie that manages to fulfill just about every adolescent male fantasy in existence. John Hughes doesn't miss a trick in this, his best film.

4. "Commando"  
This is classic Arnold. Schwarzenegger plays a retired commando whose daughter is kidnapped by Latin American bad guys who try to force him to kill a liberal leader. This has all the action we've come to expect from Mr. S, plus humor. Those who saw "Twins" were probably amazed that Schwarzenegger could be funny, yet his comic talent has been evident in all his films, especially "Commando." This is one of the best fusions of action and quips ever made and boasts a strong performance by Rae Dawn Chong to boot.

5. "Caddyshack"  
The funniest golf 'n' gopher movie ever made. The movie is a typical class-conflict country-club romp that features Bill Murray as a fanatical groundskeeper bent on gopher elimination. It's about a young caddie trying to get ahead, but who cares? The cast of comics in this flick is the reason to see it. The most classless performance of all time is delivered by Rodney Dangerfield. Forget the sequel, this is the only "Caddyshack" worth seeing.

6. "Action Jackson"  
This movie answers the question, "Can Carl Weathers (Apollo Creed in "Rocky I, II and III") really act?" The answer is no, but that doesn't stop this movie from being an extremely appealing and occasionally very witty action flick. Evil industrialist, Detroit auto magnate and karate expert Craig T. Nelson is up to no good, and tough cop, Harvard lawyer, and karate expert Carl Weathers is on the case. One of the few films to admit that it's set in Detroit, it also features a sizzling performance by Vanity.

7. "Better Off Dead"  
This flick stars John Cusack as a high-school student whose life is falling apart. He's failing classes and is madly in love with the French exchange student across the street. As if that weren't enough, cartoons keep talking to him. His attempts at suicide fail miserably. The imaginative use of animation in "Better Off Dead" is the real reason to see this film.

8. "The Last Dragon"  
This is definitely the most charming, dumbest action film made in the last 10 years. Bruce Leroy aspires to become just like Bruce Lee, and in the process, wins the heart of Vanity. Nobody in this Motown-produced movie seems to have to worry about intelligence. The bad guys are idiots. Leroy is none too swift with anything but his hands and fists, and Vanity is, well, Vanity. This is strictly comic-book filmmaking, but it retains a kind of sweetness that raises it above the normal stupid action flick. The fights are beautiful to watch as well.

9. "The Beastmaster"  
Marc Singer stars in one of the only sword-and-sorcery movies that really work. Singer plays a man whose village is destroyed by bad guys. He vows revenge and, accompanied by an eagle, a black tiger, two weasels and the obligatory escaped slave girl (Tanya Robards), he fights the forces of evil. Apart from never taking itself too seriously, this film gives us the best performance by a weasel in a supporting role in years.

10. Any film by Schwarzenegger (except "Raw Deal"); anything with Bill Murray; "Rocky" anything and "First Blood;" Chevy Chase's "Vacation" flicks and anything by Monty Python, but no Chuck Norris movies or anything with 'Ninja' in the title.

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