

A Silly Obsession: American Teenagers Love Simple Movies

Amber McKinney
Staff Writer

Do you know which movie held the number one spot at the box office for two weeks running this summer and continues to bounce between the second and third spots? That's right, *Superbad*. This hormone-driven movie has a plot that centers on a trio of high school seniors attempting to get alcohol for a party. The film was an instant hit among the youth of American. Similar movies that have recently been in theaters or are still in theaters are *Balls of Fury*, *The Brothers Solomon*, and *Hot Rod*.

Most people will admit that certain movies, such as the ones listed above, are especially ridiculous. When I first started writing this article, I wanted to describe these particular movies with the adjective "stupid." Interchangeable adjectives suggested to me were "redundant," "predictable," and "dumb." I decided to go with the words "simple" and "B-list" because they refer to the simplified plot lines and overly used gag jokes that these movies are known for.

Simple movies are easy to understand and enjoy because they do not require any deep emotional reaction from the audience. They are all very similar, and it's sometimes difficult to distinguish one B-list movie from another. They have a basic plot-line that the characters mosey along and get easily distracted from. All of them abound with slapstick comedy, and many of them incorporate vulgar language and crude jokes.

I've watched plenty of

simple movies, and to tell the truth, I've enjoyed some of them. I picked out four of the movies that I've seen that I think best portray what I think a B-list movie is.

SuperBad: If you can get over the fact that almost every other word is an expletive or a sexual reference, that the plot is mainly about teenage boys getting alcohol so that they can have sex with girls at a party, and that cops let a high-schooler shoot at a flaming car, then maybe you'll see the deeper meaning of friendship that is portrayed by the main characters. Most likely you'll be distracted by the half-naked, drunk teenagers or by the drunk police officers or by the angry, drunk bum.

Napoleon Dynamite: No foul language or exceptionally crude jokes in this one but no plot either. Maybe the screenwriters were going for a Theater of the Absurd feeling. The comedy of *Napoleon Dynamite* mostly revolves around how awkward and nerdy the main character is. Most people either love or hate *Napoleon Dynamite*; there are very few people who are neutral about the character.

Zoolander: This movie plays on the stereotype that all male models must be stupid, and the male models in this movie are definitely stupid. There is an impossible, rambling plot line that centers around stopping the main character, an idiotic, failing male model, from killing the Prime Minister of Malaysia. The stupid male model has been brainwashed by his modeling agency to be an assassin. Chaos ensues.

Blades of Glory: Will

Ferrell King of B-list movies, stars in this outlandish film along, with the star of *Napoleon Dynamite* aka Jon Heder. When you're not wondering how they got Will Ferrell into those clingy Spandex suits, you're wondering about the sexual orientation of the characters. Are they gay. Are they straight? Does it even matter? The ending makes you sit there and stare at the screen, not in admiration but in absolute shock at the absurdity of it.

It's not as if simple movies are a new invention. The Three Stooges were the Will Ferrell, Adam Sandler, and Ben Stiller of yesteryear. Of course, the old black and white actors stayed away from anatomy jokes and expletives, but their performances still ran purely on slapstick comedy and outrageous situations that are common in B-list films today.

Many Americans have become obsessed with ridiculous movies like these and can't seem to get enough of them. Teenagers especially seem to be drawn to such movies. You won't find many senior citizens or families sitting down with their popcorn and mega-Cokes to watch *Knocked Up* or *Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy*.

Teenagers are the target audience for the B-list movies. I speak from experience. We go out in our social hordes and watch movies like *Borat* and *Mr. Woodcock* for \$8.50 a ticket. Why? We're wasting our money on movies that have barely any substance to them and seem capable of zapping our brain cells with stupidity.

One thing that I think

people really like about simple movies is that you don't have to pay attention when you're watching one. You don't have to understand some great, motivating message or associate with a character's conflicted feelings. You can even zone out for half of the movie and come back in later, and you will still relatively know what is happening.

Most of the time, we don't want to think when we go to the movies; we just want to relax and have a good time. There's often no real substance to a B-list film; the point is to make you laugh at stupid situations and jokes for an hour or so. These movies are fun to watch, and they make you feel good about yourself because you can say, "Well, at least my life isn't that crazy." B-list movies don't make you want to get up and change the world or face a social problem in our society. All the conflicts in the film are fixed in a nice, neat bundle by the end of the movie, and that's the way we wish things worked in the real world.

For American teenagers, watching simple movies is a guilty pleasure. We know that we should be spending our time doing something worthwhile. We know that we should be wasting our money on something that's vocabulary contains words beyond four-letter curses. However, we still find ourselves mesmerized by the simple, B-list movies. They allow us to escape from real life drama and hard decisions into worlds where everything is just one big, rambling joke that has a clean cut, happily-ever-after ending

where the good guy wins and the bad guy gets a cantaloupe thrown at his head.

Single white male with certain quirks seeking single white female. Must be willing to care for my liger when the need arises. Ques-a-DIL-uh making abilities are a plus. Must get along with my dysfunctional family: Uncle Rico, the would-be NFL star, Kip, the online dating genius and my dune-riding grandmother. Contact N.Dynamite@hotmail.com

"The idea is to get the pencil moving quickly."

—Bernard Malamud

So get your pencil moving, and send your fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction to be published in *The Colton Review*.

Email your submissions to editor,
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Deadline: December 7th

Are You Free on Friday?

Mark your calendars! September 28th, CAB is sponsoring a FREE coffeehouse in the Cate Center. Don't like coffee? Go anyway! There will be coffee, tea, hot cocoa, cheesecake, and cookies. *String Theory*, a southern, folk band, including our own Professors Michael Novak, Bill Schmidt, and Georgia Schmidt and NCSU Professor Steven Vincent, will be the entertainment. This event is community friendly, so feel free to bring your boyfriend and other friends who are not Meredith students.