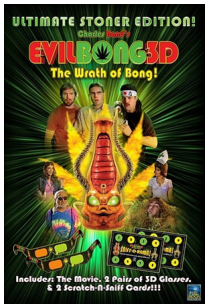
When did Full Moon Features become so shamelessly focused on merchandising? Charles Band has always been conscious of enfranchising his guilty pleasure B-pictures, and his late-‘80s/early-’90s productions provided a fun alternative to the era’s endless direct-to-video horror sequels (and perhaps certain 10-year-olds found a crossover of PUPPETMASTER and DEMONIC TOYS as exciting a prospect as Transformers fighting G.I. Joe…though not nearly as cool as the possibility of ALIEN VS. PREDATOR).

That was then, this is the DVD for EVIL BONG 3D: THE WRATH OF BONG, which, when viewed through a haze of cynicism, plays out like a feature-length commercial for cartoonish pot paraphernalia. The esteemed Mr. Band would clearly rather you watch the film through a different kind of haze, but he also stuck a commercial for Hauntedcasinos.com ahead of the DVD menu that attempts to sell you on collector playing cards, T-shirts, cigarette lighters and shot glasses before mentioning that, oh yeah, THE HAUNTED CASINO is a movie starring Sid Haig and Michael Berryman.



Then again, like many of Full Moon’s creature designs, the Alien Bong would look really cool as a collectible, with its snaky horns, Boglin grin and black-light-ready eyes. It sucks as a movie monster, but Band’s film makes a running gag out of acknowledging that. EVIL BONG 3D takes the plot of a ’50s sci-fi potboiler and cross-pollinates it with winking post-*High Times* pot

humor. When a spaceship carrying a fussy-voiced extraterrestrial water-pipe crashes in Southern California, it’s mistaken for a meteor, THE BLOB-style, and winds up in the head shop run by stoners Brett (Brian Lloyd) and Bachmann (Mitch Eakins). From there, the Alien Bong begins to plot world domination, despite the efforts of UFO enthusiast Alistair (Peter Stickles) and martial arts expert Larnell (John Patrick Jordan).

Apparently, the evil bong plans to whisk potheads to its home world to propagate with an alien species, represented by half-nude women in body paint standing in a smoky room full of black-out curtains. The story eventually spins into developments that would confuse a straight-edge audience paying sharp attention; the movie challenges PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE for number of scenes in which an incomprehensible alien conspiracy is discussed endlessly by actors stranded on cheap sets.

Those actors are basically the best part of EVIL BONG 3D. Stickles, Jordan, Lloyd and Jacob Witkin aren’t brilliant enough to transform dumb weed puns into an entertaining movie, but they are all charming and game for a task that they must all be aware falls well below their talent (special mention must be made of Christina DeRosa as the silent Nurse Hookah, whose shameless pantomime and mugging doesn’t detract from the simple fact that she’s really, really hot). Any chuckles earned by the film come solely from the cast’s comic timing, such as when Stickles is approached by a topless woman and deadpans, “I seem to have encountered an alien being.”

Stickles is the third actor to play Alistair, but most of the cast returns from the first two EVIL BONG movies. If you missed the first two, the backstories are the one element of this film that isn’t confusing; each character’s entrance is accompanied by dialogue recapping their role in the previous adventure. For example, the always appealing Robin Sydney shows up, and the others go to great lengths to explain to the audience what made her character an irredeemable harpy. Also returning: Eebee, the talking bong with a stereotypical sassy-black-lady voice, whose cliché-ridden dialogue can’t even muster the energy to be offensive. That the puppeteered mouths on both talking bongs can’t even remotely approximate the spoken dialogue just reeks of the laziness that soaks this production.

So EVIL BONG 3D isn’t much fun and doesn’t make much sense, but how’s the 3D? Answer: a complete failure. Band goes with the blue-and-red lenses and then doesn’t even do anything to exploit the effect. There are a few MIND’S EYE-style CGI kaleidoscopes and exactly one joke in which an object is shoved into the lens (a pipe being passed, predictably), but otherwise, the 3D contributes little more than a headache. Unfortunately, the DVD does not include an option to watch in two dimensions (though a 2-D disc is available separately).

What *is* included are “Sniff-O-Rama” scratch-and-smell cards that follow the model of John Waters’ Odorama from POLYESTER: A number appears on screen, you scratch the corresponding circle…and get a nosefull of the most nauseating chemical approximations of marijuana funk conceivable. Inhale too closely, and you’ll end up with an exceedingly unpleasant taste in your mouth to go with the sudden desperate need to scrub your fingernails. The nauseating smell is repeated until finally, some variety toward the end, in the form of artificial rose scent (contributing the movie’s one truly clever gag) and oregano standing in for an onscreen pizza.

EVIL BONG 3D may fall short of entertaining via either the lame film or poorly executed gimmicks, but it’s not for lack of trying. The “Ultimate Stoner Edition” DVD comes with a special feature composed of six videos created by Full Moon fans to advertise EVIL BONG 3D (also featuring Puppet Master and The Gingerdead Man) and a four-minute video featuring Band working the crowd at EVIL BONG 3D’s Chicago premiere, followed by a few charitable fan testimonials. Shameless as he is, Band is one of the rare low-budget film producers attempting to package value and fun into his products. Though he’s unlikely to capture a fan base with this lame excuse for a movie, no one could accuse him of skimping on the extra features.

MOVIE: 💀💀💀💀

DVD PACKAGE: 💀💀💀💀