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Cheap frills in Hollywood



Scary Movie leaves little to the imagination in its crudeness

By BBC News Online's entertainment correspondent Tom Brook

One of the most sexually explicit mainstream films in Hollywood history, a spoof called Scary Movie, has just opened at 3,000 cinemas across the US.

Directed by Keenen Ivory Wayans, it satirises teen slasher films and high-school sex comedies.

It leaves little to the imagination with close-up shots of male genitalia and vivid depictions of all manner of bodily fluids.

Scary Movie is just the latest near-to-the-knuckle film to emerge from Hollywood.

The trend began to intensify two years ago with There's Something About Mary from the film-making brothers Peter and Bobby Farrelly.

The raucous comedy, with its infamous hair gel scene, became a surprise summer hit which grossed more than \$170m (£112m) in the US alone.

It was followed up last year by the teen comedy American Pie, which chronicled a group of young men vying to lose their virginity.

“**They are cheap to make, cheap to promote with a built-in audience - the young male college kid**”

Toby Miller, Professor of Cinema Studies

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Rude success

Crude spoof Scary Movie is a box office hit



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This year, US movie-goers have already flocked to see the raucous Road Trip, a teen film packed with sexual escapades.



American Pie was one of the early examples of the tasteless trend

The Farrelly brothers have also returned with a vengeance with their dark provocative comedy Me, Myself & Irene.

Jim Carrey plays a police officer with a split personality who exhibits some bizarre traits that include shooting a live cow, feeding himself from the breast of a nursing mother and playing with a sex toy.

Wave of grossness

According to Toby Miller, professor of cinema studies at New York University, rude and politically incorrect films are all the rage in Hollywood right now for financial reasons.

He said: "They are cheap to make, cheap to promote with a built-in audience - the young male college kid."

Although many social commentators are outraged by this wave of grossness, some industry figures claim that today's films are probably not that much more explicit than in the past.

Veteran film-maker Ivan Reitman - who produced Road Trip - said: "Frankly, I remember the 70s and 80s to be raunchier in a strange way.



Road Trip takes the lack of political correctness one step further

"There was probably more nudity in movies in the 70s and 80s than there is today."

Not everyone would agree with this assessment.

Several critics have expressed surprise that the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), gave Scary Movie only an R rating.

This means children accompanied by an adult can see it and there is speculation that the MPAA may be relaxing its standards.

A more likely explanation is that Scary Movie only got an R rating because it is a comedy.

'Letting off steam'

Road Trip isn't only sexually explicit. The four young men featured in the film steal a bus from the blind. In another scene a character puts a live mouse inside his mouth.

Todd Phillips, who co-wrote and directed Road Trip, does not offer a response to those who might find his film offensive.



The success of Scary Movie could prove decisive

"If in the writing process you say: 'Blind people are going to be offended by this or people that like mice are going to be offended by this,' you start censoring yourself - that does not a funny movie make," he said.

Most Hollywood films that trade in tastelessness have done extremely well at the box office.

But Jim Carrey's latest Farrelly Brothers venture, Me, Myself & Irene, has failed to create much heat.



Me, Myself & Irene is pulling in the crowds

This suggests that raunchiness may be losing its power to pull in an audience.

Scary Movie, heavily laden with sex gags, may well serve as a test case.

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