"Most People Bring Their Own Spoons': THE ROOM's participatory audiences as comedy mediators"

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Abstract

THE ROOM (Tommy Wiseau, 2003) has developed the unenviable reputation as being one of the worst films ever made, yet at the same time is celebrated by 'fans' who take considerable pleasure from its perceived ineptitude. Considerable media attention has also been afforded to the film's participatory theatrical screenings, which typically feature constant heckling, chants, and the throwing of plastic spoons.

Through the analysis of the film’s British audiences (in the form of surveys, interviews, observation and autoethnography), this article argues that The Room demonstrates the impact of audience participation on a film’s reception, which in this case transforms an ostensible drama into a comedy experience. These audiences function as temporary communities that encourage the search for humour in ‘badness’, creating a cycle of comedy mediation and verification that affirms the interpretive competence of all attendees.

The article begins to theorise the previously underdeveloped concept of 'so bad it’s good' by drawing a link between comedy and cult media audiences, as well as exploring the social functions of comedy as they relate to cultural texts.
Audience participation is required. Spoons mandatory. Although these are more a comment on The Room’s most baffling non-sequitur rather than to be wilfully offensive, 8) Okay the spoon thing. One of The Room’s bizzarrest and laziest eccentricities is in part of its production design. The framed pictures in Lisa’s apartment contain pictures of spoons, clearly this is the placeholder image meant to be removed from the frame after it had been bought. The Room spends a lot time with characters holding or throwing a football, often in constricted areas where nobody would ever throw a football. You probably won’t be allowed to throw a football around the cinema, so perhaps don’t bring one yourself. 20) General squeamishness. This can be articulated any time Lisa’s neck does ‘that thing’. Volume 8, Issue 2 November 2011. ‘Most People Bring Their Own Spoons’: The Room’s participatory audiences as comedy mediators. Richard McCulloch University of East Anglia, UK. Abstract. The Room (Tommy Wiseau, 2003) has developed the unenviable reputation as being one of the worst films ever made, yet at the same time is celebrated by ‘fans’ who take considerable pleasure from its perceived ineptitude. Considerable media attention has also been afforded to the film’s participatory theatrical screenings, which typically feature constant heckling, chants, and the throwing of plastic spoons. Th Richard McCulloch: “Most People Bring Their Own Spoons”: The Room’s participatory audiences as comedy mediators”. Sophie Quirk: ‘Containing the Audience: The ‘Room’ in Stand-Up Comedy’. Eve Smith: ‘Selling Terry Pratchett’s Discworld: Merchandising and the Cultural Economy of Fandom’. Simon Weaver: ‘Definitions of the humorous in Chris Rock and Russell Peters fan blogs: A discussion of the problem of incongruity’. Nathan A. Wilson: “Divisive Comedy: A Critical Examination of Audience Power”. Special Section: International Film Audiences C