

CINEMA

By Brad Lemley



Don Johnson and Blood

A Boy and his Dog Waco Cinema I

The hype almost oozes out of the press release from LQJaf Productions: "This thought-provoking motion picture focuses on the bizarre world of the future and particularly on the adventures of a young man and his canine companion. It's a world filled with violence, savage intelligence, dangerous radiation, mutants, and yes, even love." "A Boy and His Dog," the release bubbles on, "is an R rated, rather kinky tale of survival."

The problem isn't that such gushing praise is undeserved — one can hardly gush enough praise onto this excellent film. What is unfortunate is that overzealous PR types have taken this interesting, entertaining, ironic little movie and drowned it with tidal waves of verbiage and pictures of unclothed females until one steps into the theater expecting some sort of unholy blend of "Tommy", "Behind the Green Door" and "Fritz the Cat." The juxtaposition of the words "boy", "dog" and "kinky" just isn't fair — the boy and the dog hardly touch each other. And the "world filled with violence, savage etc..." is also misleading. All of those ingredients are in the film, but they act as a backdrop

for the essential element — irony. Based on a novella by Harlan Ellison (the Chief Prophet of the New Wave in Science Fiction, the New Yorker blithely informs the uninitiated), "Boy" follows Vic (Don Johnson) and his dog as they scabble for food in a post-atomic-war world of dried mud wasteland. Life is tough for Vic — his mutant telepathic dog nags him constantly, and while food is scarce, women are even scarcer.

So who can blame him when he succumbs to the entreaties of a nubile lass who seems to pop from nowhere? Not us, certainly, and we follow him down a cast-iron rabbit hole with the hope that the lass is leading him to a happier, easier life. The hole, however, empties out into a different kind of society with different ideas of post-war survival, and the irony kicks into high gear.

"Boy" is a rarity — a low-budget film that doesn't look like a low-budget film. Director-adaptor L.Q. Jones pulls off the deception with some excellent scripting, tight editing, and fine new talent: notably Don Johnson, the boy, and Suzanne Benton, the appetizing temptress who lures Vic into the world of the Other Alternative. At a time when the Sci-film industry seems as barren as Ellison's mud-flat world of 2024, "A Boy and His Dog" is most welcome.

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WestWorld Waco Cinema I

Statistics professors love to recite that old adage, "Put some monkeys in a room full of typewriters for an indefinite period and they will eventually write all the great books."

It's an interesting notion — so interesting, in fact, that it now appears that someone has tried it, but rather than waiting around for a couple billion years, they took what the monkeys cranked out in the first half-hour and used it for the script of WestWorld, the hunk of celluloid gook that is currently crawling shamelessly across the Waco cinema screen on the bill with the aforementioned fine film.

The combination is interesting, for both are ostensibly the same kind of movie — low-budget, escapist sci-fi flicks. The contrast is derived from the fact that "Boy" succeeds, drawing its strength from a captivating premise and a well-written script, while WestWorld fails, crippled from the start by a ridiculous premise and put to rest by a script that makes the inclusion of motion pictures under the first amendment seem like a move worth reconsidering.

It goes something like this: In the future everything is sterilized and pacified — no aggression, no violence. As a result, all of humankind's innate, violent urges are bottled up, gurgling around

and looking for an escape. The gurgling is especially irresistible within the bodies of two adventurous businessmen, played by Richard Benjamin (The Sunshine Boys, Portnoy's Complaint) and James Brolin (Gable and Lombard).

Must they content themselves with cold showers and Gunsmoke reruns? Not at all, for the society of the future has risen to demand and created WestWorld, an android-filled fantasy land in which one can maim and kill transistorized gunslinging foes with careless abandon. Our protagonists launch themselves on a spree of gleeful mechanicide and everything seems swell until...

You guessed it. The machines start fighting back.

From then on it just gets sillier, and the important questions still don't get answered. Why, for example, would anyone want to spend a thousand dollars a day for the privilege of shooting lifelike robots? How can machines get a disease (which is how the folks at WestWorld Control explain the android revolt)? Why does one of the robots (played by Yul Brynner) have a Yugoslavian accent? And why, above all, was this movie made in the first place?

While these may sound like tough questions, the answer, as anyone who stuck out this whole two-hour mistake can testify, is easy:

"Who cares?"

MOVIES

the movies

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Raquel Welch
Bill Cosby
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Plus "WW & The Dixie Dance Kings"
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