

Rogue Cinema

We cover it all, because we just love film!

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Handlebar (2010) – By Cary Conley



When I opened my package from Rebel Pictures, I immediately was smitten: the business card reads, "Independent. Because Hollywood Sucks." I knew immediately I was going to like this flick. Perfect for Rogue readers.

Two bumbling wannabe crooks are tasked with kidnapping a young lady for the small-time gangster in their town. Unfortunately, they mistakenly kidnap the gangster's own daughter. Once they realize their mistake, there's no turning back, so they keep up the masquerade even as the gangster assigns them to track down the "kidnappers" and return his daughter to him. This is the simple set-up for Handlebar, appropriately subtitled Steering Toward Disaster.

As the dumb crooks keep compounding their mistakes, their comedy of errors makes for...well, good comedy, sometimes bordering on slapstick, but not quite. The film opens with director/star Michael McCallum drinking coffee in a Thai restaurant. The Thai owner is upset at him for not ordering food and wasting her time and counter space for some measly coffee. She accuses him of taking up valuable space for other customers, but as Dwayne (McCallum) looks around at the totally empty restaurant and says, "I'm the only one here," the retort from the Thai woman is a curt, "Because you run off the other customers." At the same time, the pudgy Benny (Shane Hagedorn) is cruising the streets on his circa-1985 Moped with his Hawaiian shirt wide open. The viewer knows what kind of film this is going to be as the setup for the film is established with these two dufuses being hired to do the kidnapping. What follows is 60 minutes of Keystone Cops-style stumbling and bumbling as the two would-be goons try to stay alive until they can plot their escape.

Some of the funniest scenes are reserved for McCallum and Hagedorn as they spend time trying to plant false information about the "kidnappers" around town to get the heat off of them. They are so desperate they even get a stoner and try to brainwash him, but they are both so inept that they can't even get their stories right—is it a black man on a scooter or five guys with no tattoos (Dwayne has "sleeves," thus the story about kidnappers with no tattoos). I found these scenes perhaps the most enjoyable of all.

McCallum is a good director and uses many interesting shots and angles in the film. Both he and Hagedorn are also very good comedic actors and carry the film for the supporting actors who average from decent to not very good. But using one's friends and family is often a pitfall for directors of low-budget films and the two main characters are strong enough to overlook the rest of the cast. I particularly enjoyed Hagedorn's wide range of emotions from riotously funny all the way to serious enough to shed tears. McCallum as Dwayne is the smarter of the two and balances Benny's colorful character well.

Featuring an absolutely fantastic soundtrack from a band called Eightball Grifter, it was good enough to

Monthly

Yes (74%)

No (22%)

A little. (5%)

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make me go out on the web in search of more from them. Think country music crossed with Motorhead and that describes the soundtrack—very rockabilly. Eightball Grifter is my new favorite band and their music is perfect for this very funny low-budget comedy.

Nothing weighty here, just some good, old-fashioned fun with a couple of low-life losers and a bad streak of luck. But it makes for an enjoyable view, for sure. So ride on over to Rebel Pictures (rebelpictures.net) and try out Handlebar. The DVD package is ultradeluxe with three separate commentary tracks, trailers, and even a short film for only \$20 and check out Eightball Grifter while you are at the site for a \$5 CD—you won't regret either purchase.

By Duane • [Film Reviews](#) •

222 views

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