

Film Review: The Toxic Avenger

Because of my predilection for sleazy 80's horror flicks, I usually come across a film so poor, unintelligent, gory, and downright hilarious, it is branded into my memory for good. One of those films is *The Toxic Avenger*, which some of you hopefully remember from the 70s/80s/90s Party Albion had in the Mas Y Mas in March (it was playing in the background.)

The Toxic Avenger tells the story of Melvin Junko (in some versions known as Melvin Ferd), a pathetic scrawny mop boy (literally a "Melvin") at Tromaville (in New Jersey) Health Club, who is transformed into world's ugliest superhero by jumping into a truckload of toxic waste after a prank goes wrong. The scene of Melvin's metamorphosis to Toxie, and the outrageous over-dubs of Kenneth Kessler's voice done in Toxie's dialogue scenes had me doubled over with stomach cramps from laughing the first time I viewed it, and even after countless viewings it never ceases to get a hearty chuckle out of me.

Like many "classic" cult movies from the 80s, directors Lloyd Kaufman and Michael Herz didn't have much of a budget to make the film. In fact, they had a little under half a million dollars, \$475,000, but despite this, the special effects are actually astonishingly impressive. I might as well intercede here

and say that most people will think the film is fairly lousy in terms of camera work, lighting, not to mention acting, but that's part of the film's charm. It's quirky, disgusting, cheap, and I don't recommend it to viewers sensitive to nudity, extreme violence, or crass language. To give you some examples of the film's head-turning hallmarks:



The notorious "head-crushing" scene was omitted on the Rated version of "The Toxic Avenger" because critics contended it was too violent.

Tromaville's Mayor Belgoody is consistently called "Mein Führer" by one of his assistants.

A child is murdered in the film, which violates one of the genre's codes that violence towards children is *usually* avoided.

A dog is killed in the film, which, at the time of its release, received the most complaints from viewers.

I think one thing that really comes to mind in reviewing this movie is "bad taste," which is curiously also the title of another classic movie by Peter Jackson, and a personal favorite. If you've got the stomach and opportunity to watch *The Toxic Avenger*, by all means, watch it.

By Matthijs Smits