

Meatballs not even as good as Animal House

By Bob Thompson
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National Lampoon's Animal House wasn't much of a movie. The acting was pedestrian, the directing an exercise in scatology.

But the gross-out was funny at a base level and the hour-and-a-half spent watching the antics of John Belushi worth the price of admission.

Meatballs (at the Oshawa Drive-in), a sort of follow-up, is a failure by comparison.

In fact, the movie is dumb by any comparison and that includes Milton Berle.

Instead of filming the weird and wacky antics of college kids in the '50s, the Lampoon boys go after modern-day summer camps with a limp stab at satire and

sophomoric jokes usually two grades below Gilligan's Island.

Directing the series of vignettes is Ivan Reitman, that humorous chap who produced Animal House and found time to ruin the horror film theme with his presentations of Shivers and Rabid, two distasteful clinkers.

In keeping with the Animal House formula, a Saturday Night Live alumnus was hired to play the Meatballs lead. This time it is Bill Murray, who portrays the head camp counsellor competently enough given the lifelessness of what surrounds him.

Murray, in fact, is the sole source of humor unless you count Spaz (Jack Blum), a counsellor in training and a virgin at heart, or Morty (Harvy Atkin think-Canadian TV commercials), the luckless head of Camp North Star.

Don't count on the Meatballs script at all. Written by Len Blum, Dan Goldberg, Janis Allen and Harold Ramis (who helped with Animal House), the pat jokes, tired and blue, and the hackneyed pranks are needlessly familiar.

Granted there is a nostalgia about summer camp life for some but the sequences depicting them are so shoddy and uninteresting the familiarity breeds contempt.

Filmed near



The only worthwhile performance in Meatballs at the Oshawa Drive-in is Bill Murray's (far right). The comedy in the film is weaker than the many plots.

Haliburton, Ont., the story has a few sub-plots (actually the whole movie is full of sub-plots) designed to add some weight to the production. One fails miserably when Murray befriends a youngster ignored by his

family and cabin-mates. The rest of the action has camp counsellors acting foolish, camp counsellors in training acting foolish and the

campers acting barely at all since they have little to say. Amid the movie's mess is Elmer Bernstein's classy film score played

by Toronto symphony musicians, which is as out of place in this picture as the film would be at Cannes - or on television, for that matter.

movies

oshawa this week