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Shaun of The Dead
2004, Rogue Pictures
Directed by Edgar Wright
Starring Simon Pegg, Nick Frost, Kate Ashfield, Lucy Davis

See, the message here is that there really is more than one way to be "dead". Take Shaun's roommate, Ed (Nick Frost) for example. He's a man

who refuses to change his ways no matter how many people take exception to him, and Shaun himself, who is a man who can't seem to take his life or that of any others seriously. Even when the dead make their presence known, he is oblivious, as is Ed. By the standards of the movie, these men behave like the deceased they encounter, albeit on an empathic rather than physical scale. When the events of the movie have run their course, however, the "dead" have been separated from the "living," with the "living" element consisting, at least by the film's definition, of those individuals who still possess the capacity for change with regards to themselves.

While this is not a brilliant movie, it is bright in ways that are, as I have said, occasionally less than apparent; but it also isn't for everyone, due to its subtlety and a few scenes that were unpleasant enough to encourage one couple leave the theatre where I was watching the film. Also, the plot comes off as being almost superfluous, with no twists to be had, and characterization forms a patina as thin as a silk windshield.

The comic aspects are also not for everyone, and the fast and furious British accents might be difficult for some people to decipher. But in the end, these concerns don't even come close to de-railing this film; it's solid fun with a Union Jack flag attached, and not without it's rewards.

It's time to confess one of my trade secrets: everything I know about comedy I learned from the British. I don't believe many North Americans know the name of Terry Pratchett, but there was a time when I thought him the funniest satirical mind alive; his

Discworld novels revealed to me a humour of a different variety. It had logical depth while being related to the plot, and I was fascinated. Literature bearing the Pratchett name soon gained preponderance on my bookshelves. Shaun of The Dead is a logical comedy, but with a difference in that it's not so obvious, at least, not on the surface.

The plot consists of Shaun (Simon Pegg), a blue-collar stereotype whose life is, somewhat predictably, falling apart. This is hardly helped by the fact that the dead have recently come back to life, and Shaun, his friends, and immediate family, find themselves in a fight for their lives to avoid becoming un-dead finger food. If that were all there is to be gleaned from this film, however, then this review might have been much shorter. But Shaun of The Dead is a cake with many layers, folks.

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by Dan McNeill

