

A Borat Review

By Amy E. Wong



It's official: I've been demoted to seventh place in my man's life—right below Howard Stern, The Ramones, *Scarface*, *South Park*, *The Simpsons*, and...**Borat**.

What makes me so certain of this? After accompanying him to a midnight showing of the film on Friday, I was dismayed to see my love transform into Borat at a party on Saturday night, reciting lines verbatim in that Kazakhstan accent, giggling hysterically while exclaiming, “Wa wa wee wa!,” and shouting “Hi Five-ah!” Yes, he was buzzed. And, yes, I'll begrudgingly admit that it was slightly endearing, but my question is: “What makes Borat better than me?” (Grrr...)

I mean, Borat is sexist, racist, anti-Semitic, horny, and just plain rude! But...that's why it's so good. *Borat!: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan* is brazen and fresh. The film, a mock-documentary, follows Sacha Baron Cohen, aka Borat, on a cross-country road trip. Along the way, Borat's backward mentality incites strong reactions and reveals the hypocrisy that lies at the heart of the “U.S. of A.” As a satiric comedy, Borat serves as social commentary and reveals the differences that divide America's united front.

On Sexism and Racism:

Borat's sexist attitude and ranting about a woman's “vagine” draw mixed reactions. Radical feminists, as one would expect, get their knickers all bunched up when Borat comments on how it was scientifically proven that women have pea-sized brains. And frat boys, as one would expect, welcome Borat with open arms (literally) while drunkenly inquiring about the whores in Russia.

Aside from these two extremes, there are other characters in the film who challenge boundaries. I am grateful to say that a *male* driving instructor tells Borat, “In America, a woman can choose who she has sex with,” to which Borat incredulously exclaims “WHAAAAAT?” What's interesting is that Borat, who originally falls in lust with Pamela

continued on back

Anderson's straw-blond hair and double-Ds, ends up with the kind-hearted, overweight, African-American prostitute (or as Borat would surely say, "fat chocolate-faced whore").

On Anti-Semitism:

Near the beginning of the film, Borat says that Kazakhstan celebrates the annual "Running of the Jew" ceremony. When Borat comes to America, he brings his anti-Semitism with him and, at one point, walks into a gun store and asks which weapon would be best for killing a Jew. The hefty salesman responds, without missing a beat, "a 9 mm or a .45?" Set in a country that crucified Mel Gibson for his drunken anti-Semitic slurs, this scene seems unrealistic to me.

Borat kills me (both in an aggravating and hilarious manner). In one scene, he goes to a bed and breakfast owned by a sweet, elderly Jewish couple. Borat, being himself, can't help but think that they want to poison and kill him when they provide him with food and shelter. Later, when two roaches enter from beneath his bedroom door, Borat thinks that the Jews have transformed into roaches, yelps for mercy, and throws dollar bills at them. His irrational fear and pride cause him to run away, starving and homeless.

On Gays:

Borat may not like homosexuals, but he sure likes gay people. Not only does he party it up at the Gay Pride Festival, but he also does a little something that makes him say this: "My moustache still tastes of your testes!"

Borat doesn't exactly see people for who they are because his prejudices blind him. He doesn't like Jews, even when they're kind to him. He has a distinct aversion to the word "homosexual" but is fine with the word "gay"—and will even participate in gay sexual acts—because he doesn't know what "gay" means. However, he is salvageable. When Borat brings his ex-whore wife back to Kazakhstan and begins treating her like a princess, it shows that there is hope for him yet.

Borat, the character, brings spunk to the movie. *Borat*, the movie, brings social awareness to its viewers...in the same way that Stern, *South Park*, *The Simpsons*, The Ramones, and *Scarface* bring social awareness...well, sorta :)

continued

Or maybe I'm just over-rationalizing all of this just so that my boyfriend's "Wa wa wee wa"s and "Hi Five-ah"s don't drive me up the wall in shame ; p

Last words: Despite its low production budget and limited release, Borat topped the weekend box office by bringing in \$26.4 million and is already hailed by critics as one of the funniest, most scathing, and most unapologetic movies ever made.