



The Disaster Artist: My Life Inside The Room, the Greatest Bad Movie Ever Made

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From the actor who lived through the most improbable Hollywood success story, with an award-winning narrative nonfiction writer, comes the inspiring, fascinating and laugh-out-loud story of a mysteriously wealthy outsider who sundered every road block in the Hollywood system to achieve success on his own terms—the making of *The Room*, “the *Citizen Kane* of bad movies” (Entertainment Weekly).

In 2003, an independent film called *The Room*—written, produced, directed, and starring a very rich social misfit of indeterminate age and origin named Tommy Wiseau—made its disastrous debut in Los Angeles. Described by one reviewer as “like getting stabbed in the head,” the \$6 million film earned a grand total of \$1,800 at the box office and closed after two weeks. Now in its tenth anniversary year, *The Room* is an international phenomenon to rival *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Thousands of fans wait in line for hours to attend screenings complete with costumes, audience rituals, merchandising, and thousands of plastic spoons.

Readers need not have seen *The Room* to appreciate its costar Greg Sestero’s account of how Tommy Wiseau defied every law of artistry, business, and interpersonal relationships to achieve the dream only he could love. While it does unravel mysteries for fans, *The Disaster Artist* is more than just an hilarious story about cinematic hubris: It is ultimately a surprisingly inspiring tour de force that reads like a page-turning novel, an open-hearted portrait of a supremely enigmatic man who will capture your heart.

The Disaster Artist: My Life Inside The Room, the Greatest Bad Movie Ever Made Details

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From Reader Review The Disaster Artist: My Life Inside The Room, the Greatest Bad Movie Ever Made for online ebook

Jenna says

I can remember when I was living in Los Angeles and seeing a billboard advertising for "The Room" movie, and there being an RSVP with a phone number. The billboard was there forever, but I had forgotten about it until I ordered the DVD online and saw the same image on the cover. It was funny to learn that Tommy Wiseau (whom the story is mostly centered on) paid for this prime billboard spot for five years...yes, FIVE YEARS! At \$5,000 per week for the advertising space times five years, I believe that adds up to \$1.3 Million and it all came out of his pocket as well as the cost for the movie (\$6M) and only earned \$1,800 at the box office.

I was reading an article where James Franco was listing his three favorite books of 2014 and my interest was peaked when he mentioned this book. He said that Seth Rogan had bought the rights to make a film about it, or something to that nature. I decided to read the premise and I knew I had to purchase it once I read all of the praise it had received and what it was about. Not only that, but I ordered the DVD(as stated above) so I could really jump into the experience and even had a friend watch along with me. I swear we laughed so hard that my stomach hurt the next day! The movie was so intriguing that my friend also bought the book. Although we purchased the book we broke down and ordered the audiobook as well, of which I would recommend because Greg Sestero (narrator and co-author)really nails Tommy's accent and makes the experience that much more enjoyable.

So what's it about? Well, basically it is about what most consider the worst movie of all time. It's terrible! It's so terrible that it's good, in a comedy sense. The movie was directed, produced, written, and starred Tommy Wiseau, a man of mystery. He speaks with a thick eastern European accent and has an incredible amount of money that one can only speculate where it came from considering he was poor until his thirties. Tommy has a love for America and the film industry and knows that the only way he will ever star in a movie is by making one himself and on his own dime.

Tommy has a mindset that his film is spectacular and worthy of an Oscar. It's not. This movie has plot holes galore, the acting is terrible, it goes in way too many directions, a random actor appears at the end that hasn't been in the entire movie and who in the hell he is was never implied. There is a scene where four friends dress in tuxedo's and throw a football around...why? Who knows. In another one, they go to a coffee shop where we see various people ordering drinks and then he sits and talks with his friend about basically nothing. My favorite was when two characters just squat down in the doorway and have a conversation. He thrived on scenes that would normally be cut out of a movie because it adds absolutely nothing to the movie or doesn't progress it in any way. It basically makes no sense and has zero continuity, but this book helps give some idea into the making of the script and its origins. Afterward, I actually wanted to watch it again and again with a new perspective. I've seriously never laughed so hard and the whole experience of watching the movie and reading the book was incredibly fun. I highly recommend for those with a well-rounded sense of humor.

Paul Bryant says

“Maybe I am too unique”

- Tommy Wiseau

The Room is a popular choice for the best worst movie ever*. It was a GIGANTIC VANITY PROJECT bankrolled by, produced by, starring, written and directed by a guy called Tommy Wiseau who was more than a little odd.

He was a guy in his 40s, long dyed black hair, looked like one of those heavy metal band guys who've been doing drugs and staying up late for 35 solid years, his face looked facelifted, puffy and like he never went outside and slightly melted,

and he had a weird voice with an unplaceable European accent so that English sounded like his third language, he'd got this mangled syntax and every well-known phrase would come out wrong; and in the movie, he's like an alien trying hopelessly to pass as human, his reactions slow, off-centre, he chuckles inappropriately, his lines are all in this monotonous singsong, he's mesmerizingly terrible. You think : there's something fairly wrong with that guy.

In *The Room* the other main male character is played by the author of this book Greg Sestero, who was a young pretty blonde cardboard cutout actor wannabe when the story opens,

and also when it closes, because if you check your IMDB young Greg has hardly had what you might call a career in movies. I think Greg's mom was right.

IRRATIONAL, DIM-WITTED AND ALL-ROUND CREEPY

There are three stories told in this book – first, the painful, unfunny and quite dull story of how Greg tried to become a Hollywood actor – headshots, agents, blagging, auditions, managers, callbacks, all the stuff made great fun of in the character of Joey in *Friends*, and here it's so not that much fun. Then, in an acting class Greg befriends the older weirdo Tommy, and this friendship is story number two. It's probably the best part, a friendship barely recognisable as such by Greg, until, reluctantly, it dawns on him that he actually really likes Tommy. Who appears to have no other friends.

The third story is how they made *The Room*, and this does have a certain humour to it; but it turns out that jeering at egomaniacs is not that funny when the egomaniac is a sympathetic character. Because however irrational, frankly dim-witted and all-round creepy Tommy is, he's not a bad man. He's a sad man. He's lonely. No one cares about him, he's lost. And he's picked up this absurd dream of being an actor from somewhere; and he made a lot of money selling knock-down schmutter in San Francisco; and now he decides that if Hollywood will never like him, he'll be his own Hollywood. I found I couldn't laugh heartily at his antics, the laughs died in my throat.

OUTSIDER ART

“We have moment-to-moment acting in my film. Words are secondary.”

- Tommy Wiseau

Outsider Art : that's what *The Room* is, like the Watts Towers, the recordings of Daniel Johnson or the beach sculptures at Rothéneuf by the Abbé Fouré.

It's by a person who does not recognise the agreed-upon common-or-garden reality most of us subscribe to. It's not *knowing*, unlike your John Waters or your Russ Meyer, not deliberately bad like *Pink Flamingos* or *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls*. It's raw. Most people will laugh at it. I did a couple of times. It's excruciating; but most of it is, unfortunately, only bad, rather than so-bad-it's-good. Well, its fans disagree with me, they laugh till their sides split.

I don't have a good explanation for this, but I just saw a movie called *Satan's Little Helper*, and that was in the same badness ballpark as *The Room*, but without any of the technical ineptitude. SLH had all the professionalism of any modern low budget horror movie – it was its ideas which were awful, plus having an unbearable kid as the main role who did most of the talking throughout the movie – I was praying he'd be the first victim, but no such luck. Other eyegogglingly eptless nightmares I have seen or failed to make through in recent times : *Suspiria*, *Switchblade Romance*, *The Woman*, *The Counselor*, *Brick* and *Zak and Miri Make a Porno*. In all of these cases the badness comes from the horrid inhumane or stupid ideas in the movie. They're all technically good.

But *The Room* has no technical competence. There's no coherence in the script. Many plot points are mentioned once & once only. There are continuity errors by the dozen. All the actors are first timers or are embarrassed to be there. There is no relief to be had from this relentless tsunami of crapness on every possible filmic level from minute one to minute last.

A SCENE FROM THE ROOM

Johnny : I never hit you. You shoulda hed any secrets from me. I'm your future husband.

Lisa : You sure about that? Maybe I'll change my mind.

Johnny : Don't talk like that. Whaddoo mean?

Lisa : What do you think? Women change their minds all the time.

Johnny : (*Throws head back and runs hands through hair in a gesture of carefree merriment*) Haha. You mus be kidding aren't you.

Lisa : Look, I don't wanna talk about it. I'm going to go upstairs and wash up and go to bed.

Johnny : How durr you tok to me like dat. (*Pushes her back onto the couch*). You should tell me everything.

Lisa : I can't talk right now.

Johnny : Why Lisa WHY Lisa please talk to me PLEASE . You're part of my life, you're everything. I could not go on without you Lisa.

Lisa : You're scaring me. (*He's scaring everyone at this point.*)

Johnny : I never hit you. YOU'RE TEARING ME APART LISA!

Lisa : (*Scared and hostile*) Why are you so hysterical?

Johnny : (*Pushing her back on the couch a second time*) Do you understand life? (*note : I think he means Do you understand life?*) Do you?

(Now Lisa finally gets up off the couch without being pushed back, third time lucky, & walks up the stair, but pauses and turns to Johnny.)

Lisa : (*Sudden change of tone to warm and friendly*) Don't worry about it. Everything will be alright.

Johnny : You drive me crazy.

Lisa : Goodnight Johnny.

Johnny : Don' worraboudit. I still love you. Goodnight Lisa.

A QUOTE FROM JULIETTE DANIELLE (who played Lisa)

It's hard to remember a time before The Room

I know what you mean, Juliette!

*It's currently on Youtube so you can join in all the fun.

Mizuki says

I kept seeing videos about this book on Youtube after I watched, and laughed out loud at honest trailer and videos about *The Room*, supposedly the most weird and aggressively BAD independent movie ever made.

'You're tearing me apart, Lisa!'

Who can ever forget this one! LOL

Oh why oh why there also is a Disaster Artist movie trailer here!?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4qab3...>

Ivan says

Surprisingly well written story about making of one of the worst ones.

If you by any chance don't know what *The Room* is, it's what is considered to be one of the worst movies ever made. It is not just bad it's so catastrophic that it's actually quite fun to watch. Everything in that movie is so weird, like approximation of human interaction from someone who heard fascinating stories about humans but has not actually seen one.

This book about making of that movie, about mysterious weirdo behind it but also a tale about struggles of becoming an actor, about one unlikely friendship and working on a dream against the world.

Tommy is fascinating and so unlikely and unlikable character that he almost seems like made up. Greg on the other hand is fun, likable and reasonable despite being naive and overly optimistic.

Conclusion :

Patricia A says

Ha ha ha. What a story, Mark.

Brigid ☆ Cool Ninja Sharpshooter ☆ says

For those of you who aren't familiar with *The Room*, it is a glorious piece of American cinema directed, written, and produced by the handsome devil Tommy Wiseau—who also plays the lead role in the film, naturally.

... Okay, okay. So basically, this film is often regarded as being one of the absolute **worst movies of all time**. (Maybe only rivaled by the equally-ridiculous "Troll 2.") And Tommy Wiseau looks like a creepy muppet. That said, I'm a huge fan of *The Room* because I'm a sucker for hilariously bad movies.

There is nothing quite like *The Room*, and I'm not sure how to describe it to those of you who haven't seen it. It follows a pretty basic plot about a man named Johnny who is engaged to a woman named Lisa. What Johnny doesn't know is that Lisa is cheating on him with his best friend, Mark. And the story unravels from there, chronicling how Lisa and Mark's betrayal slowly ruins Johnny's life.

Sounds pretty straightforward, right? And yet ... there's something quite special about this movie. What sets

this film apart from other flat-out bad movies is that *every moment* of it is completely ridiculous. Every scene, every *line* is just so odd that all you can do is sit there and laugh uneasily the entire time.

Just some of the memorable lines:

Other WTF highlights include:

- A weird man-child character named Denny who lives in the same building as Johnny and Lisa who they've "adopted" ... kind of ... ?
- A drug dealer shows up and tries to kill Denny—which is never addressed again after it happens.
- Lisa's mother casually mentions she's dying of cancer, to which Lisa shows no reaction and no one ever mentions it again.
- Johnny, Mark, Denny, and some of their other friends play football in tuxedos in an alleyway for no reason.

I could go on and on, but I think I'd have to just describe the entire movie scene-by-scene because like 90% of the scenes are completely irrelevant to the main plot and don't accomplish anything—and are never acknowledged again after they transpire.

Anyway, I found out maybe a year ago that Greg Sestero (who plays Mark in the movie) was going to write a book about his experience, and I was ecstatic. There are so many mysteries surrounding this movie, and I was thrilled to find out I might finally get some answers out of Sestero—especially because Tommy Wiseau himself tends to avoid answering questions about it and usually just says something like:

I checked for updates on this book regularly, but there seemed to not be much word about it anywhere until a few months before it was set to come out. Then I finally found out it was coming out on my birthday and I was like, "HELL YES."

I eagerly awaited the release of this book, and it was well worth the wait. I expected it to be a fun read—maybe kind of stupid, but fun. I'm happy to say that this book far exceeded my expectations and took a different approach than I anticipated.

What I feared about this book was that it would end up being 200 pages making fun of how insane Tommy Wiseau is. And while there are definitely a plethora of moments describing Tommy's unusual habits and qualities, I was glad that the book didn't antagonize or mock him to the extent I thought it might.

The book isn't just about how crazy Tommy Wiseau and his movie are. It's also a pretty eye-opening look into what it's like to be a struggling actor. As well as chronicling his experience acting in *The Room*, Greg Sestero also shares his stories about trying to make it as a young actor—the frustrating processes of auditioning, trying to get an agent, etc. It also focuses a lot on the strange and unlikely—but often oddly touching—friendship between Sestero and Wiseau.

BFFs <3

Don't worry, there are plenty of hilarious anecdotes about the filming of the movie—things that had me laughing harder than I've laughed at a book in a long time. (For example, one of Wiseau's original plans for the film included a part in which Johnny's car "flies off the roof and into the sky," to indicate that "maybe Johnny is a vampire." ... OMG I CAN'T EVEN. I. WHAT.)

But in the end, I found this book to actually be quite bittersweet. While it's hilarious, it also shows Tommy Wiseau as a man who genuinely wanted to make an amazing film. Especially learning about some of his horrific life experiences, and seeing how much time and effort he put into the movie, it is quite sad in some ways that his film ended up being such a laughing stock. Of course, he still got he wanted in an unexpected way—because the film does have hundreds of fans, and even ten years after its release, it still has a massive cult following.

So, I loved this book. It's hilarious, it's touching ... and I learned a lot about one of my favorite bad movies.

And of course I can't end this review without saying:

Barbara says

In 2003, a movie called 'The Room' opened in Los Angeles. The film - a drama about a woman (Lisa) who betrays her fiancé (Johnny) with his best friend (Mark) - was written, directed, and financed by Tommy Wiseau, who also stars as Johnny.

The movie, often called "one of the worst films ever made", garnered less than \$2,000 in its initial run and looked like it was headed for the movie junkyard. Wiseau, however, had other ideas. The auteur kept the movie open and continued to advertise it on a large billboard for the next five years. Wiseau, who has long black hair and a thug-like visage, is a rather oddball leading man - but his movie caught on.

'The Room' gained traction as a quirky comedy, and became a cult hit. I agree that 'The Room' is among the worst films ever made, but it's VERY FUN to watch.

Greg Sestero, the co-author of this book, played Mark in 'The Room.' Sestero's relationship with Tommy Wiseau, however, started before the movie was even conceived. This memoir, written years after the film

became a big hit, tells the story of Sestero's friendship with Wiseau.....and the making of 'The Room.'

Nineteen-year-old Greg met Tommy in a San Francisco acting class. Greg's attention was caught by Tommy's terrible - but wildly spirited - rendition of Stanley Kowalski (from 'A Streetcar Named Desire') and the two aspiring actors became scene partners.....and eventually friends.

Heavily accented Tommy - who's very secretive about his age, country of origin, and source of wealth - is an odd but amiable fellow. He allowed Greg to live in his empty Los Angeles apartment so the young man could pursue his acting dream. Greg worked hard to break into the business and had limited success - getting small parts and starring in a straight to DVD horror movie.

In time Tommy joined Greg in Los Angeles, but was unable to make any headway as an actor. So Tommy decided to write and produce his own movie, which turned out to be 'The Room' - and Greg was (eventually) pegged to co-star.

In 'The Disaster Artist', Sestero and his co-author Tom Bissell alternate between sections that describe Greg's youthful struggles to succeed as an actor, and sections about the making of 'The Room.'

In the parts about Sestero, we learn about 12-year-old Greg's 'Home Alone 2' screenplay ?; his teen age modeling gig in Europe; his mother's doubts about his choice of career; his acting classes; his bit parts; his friendship with Tommy; his move to L.A.; his attempts to secure an agent; his minor roles; his supplemental job in a men's clothing store; his girlfriend; and so on.

In the sections about 'The Room', we get a blow by blow description of the film's production. Much of this is laugh-out-loud funny, because Tommy knew nothing about movie-making. Thus, once Wiseau finished his rather confused script, he bumbled about auditioning actors; hiring (and firing) crew members; purchasing equipment; choosing his (bizarro) wardrobe; designing scenery; directing the film; arranging for the premiere; and much more.

Greg's descriptions of Wiseau's efforts are intentionally humorous, as he describes Tommy's total inability to remember the lines he wrote for himself; his eccentric decisions about décor (which generally came from thrift stores) and staging; his flaky green screen additions; his insistence on extensive love scenes that feature his naked butt ?; his outrageous over-acting; his decision to feature incongruous scenes - like one where the actors toss around a football while wearing tuxedos; his personal on-set toilet, which cost thousands of dollars.....but had a curtain instead of a door; and so on.

The movie set wasn't all fun and games though, because Tommy could be difficult. The auteur was hours late to the set every day; was sometimes insensitive to the actors; fired people willy-nilly; didn't air-condition the overheated sets; didn't supply drinking water; rejected suggestions for improving the movie; etc.

Most of the cast and crew came to believe the movie would be a total failure that no one would see. Thus, they became lackadaisical about their jobs, and - after a while - production values plummeted. Little did these people know that good-natured insults (and lightweight objects) would be hurled at the screen night after night as fans repeatedly watched - and made fun of - the cult hit.

To add to the success story of 'The Room', James Franco optioned 'The Disaster Artist' for a movie. Franco directed the film, which stars himself as Tommy Wiseau and his brother Dave as Greg Sestero. I like Franco's movie, which outlines the story of Tommy and Greg's offbeat bromance..... and exemplifies the craziness surrounding the making of the original film. Some of the most popular scenes in 'The Room' were re-shot - pixel by pixel - for 'The Disaster Artist', and it's fun to see the dual scenes side by side in Franco's movie.

The thing I like least about Sestero and Bissell's book is the long and speculative 'fantasy tale' about Tommy's early life. The authors suggest that Tommy was born somewhere in Eastern Europe; had a difficult abusive childhood; ran away from home; worked as a prostitute; made his way to the United States; became very wealthy (perhaps illegally); and so on. There are even tongue-in-cheek suggestions that 'The Room' was a creative money-laundering scheme. Though some of this may or may not be true, there's no proof - and these scenes are boring. They should have been left out (IMO).

Overall, I like 'The Disaster Artist' book, but I have reservations about Sestero's ambivalent attitude toward Wiseau. Sometimes Greg speaks highly of Tommy; at other times he makes nasty observations about his friend - comments that seem hyperbolic and disingenuous. Though Greg's (sometimes) acerbic criticism of Tommy may be justified, Sestero seems VERY ungrateful to the person who made him a success. If not for Tommy Wiseau, Sestero would probably be an unknown. Moreover, Tommy actually comes across as a sympathetic figure - a lonely man, out of his element, who works very hard to be successful. You have to admire that.

If you're interested in this saga, you should first watch 'The Room'; then read 'The Disaster Artist'; and finally see Franco's film. I promise you, you'll get a lot of laughs.

You can follow my reviews at <https://reviewsbybarbsaffer.blogspot....>

Clair says

So, a couple of weeks ago I went to see my first ever screening of *The Room*. And the moment I walked back into my apartment, I had a whole bunch of questions running around my mind. How was the movie financed, and why did it wind up looking cheaper than an American soap opera? Why was it narratively paced and staged like a short play in three acts? Did nobody tell Mr. Wiseau that stage plays function differently to movies? How did nobody try and rewrite the dialogue, to actually make it sound... well... like how normal people speak?

The Room is such an interesting phenomenon that there's two documentaries about it coming out soon. One is independently-financed and has been a collaborative effort between all the actors deciding to gather together and reminisce, and the second film is... well, going to be directed by James Franco. (Ick.)

It's amazing to think that, had Tommy simply hired out a theatre school in Los Angeles and performed *The Room* there, in its original Tennessee Williams format, his play would have probably slipped into complete obscurity. Instead, he adapted it for the screen in the most hilariously incompetent way, but seemed to show a passion for film-making that pretty much made him the modern day equivalent to Ed Wood.

Tommy Wiseau does come across as a funny figure most of the time. He brushes off the concerns of the production team with this lackadaisical "no don't worry about it and anyway, how is your sex life?" But it's

also important to note that this is the exact same man whose crew went on strike because he threw a water bottle at an actress who flubbed her line. His actors spent a lot of time battling heatstroke in the Californian sun because Tommy was too cheap to rent an extra generator for air conditioning, prompting another crewman to permanently walk off set after one too many unfulfilled promises.

Tommy was too cheap (cheep cheep cheep) to spring for the welfare of his actors and production staff, but he *did* somehow pony up the money to spend tens of thousands of dollars on merchandising, over \$360,000 on a billboard to advertise the film in Hollywood over a five year period, and even rented cinema space for it for ages, despite only ever making a few hundred dollars out of ticket sales.

The Disaster Artist doesn't particularly answer one's questions on just **how** Tommy got the money... or just why he's such a strange being in the first place. For the former, some signs point to an elderly woman named Chloe Lietzke, who presumably took Tommy in and financed most of the production. She's credited quite a lot in the introduction to the film, despite never once actually visiting the set. For the latter, well... Tommy seems to not have very good memories of his early life in Europe and has an almost fanatical desire to be seen as an American. Even going so far as to make a Thanksgiving dinner every single day in November. Seriously.

(My personal theory? Tommy is an actual vampire, ex-communicated from the vampire community. Presumably he had his memory wiped and was left out on the road somewhere. It's as valid a theory as any. :P)

This has to be one of the funniest books I've ever read, though. Tom Bissell has a real way with words, and seriously, I was laughing like a hyena as Greg recounted Tommy doing Stanley's monologue from *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

In short, this is a fantastic book that I recommend for all fans of *The Room*. 5 stars.

Some more choice quotes:

"Tommy, don't hurt my son." I put my hand over my eyes. The worst thing Tommy could do in response to this request, I thought, would be to chuckle creepily. "I would not," Tommy said, chuckling creepily.
(p. 83)

Dan had some questions about Chris-R. We all did. Why the name "Chris-R", for instance? What's with that hyphen? Tommy's explanation: "He is gangster." What about this drug business, which never comes up either before or after Chris-R's only scene in the film? "We have big problem in society with drugs. Chris-R is gangster and Denny takes drugs. So he must be rescued."
(p. 34)

*'Sandy was not the only person on set, besides me, who'd been given a complete script of *The Room*. He'd done considerable work on it, mostly turning it's dreadful dialogue ("Promotion! Promotion! That's all I hear about. Here is your coffee and English muffin and burn your mouth.") into linguistic units human beings could exchange.'*
(p. 28)

Chris says

I read this account of the Best Worst Movie Ever Made after seeing the film. I loved the movie in December and I savored every word of Greg Sestero and Tom Bissell's story just as much. It was at once weirdly touching and laugh-out-loud funny. And, of course, I heard in my head the incredible voice of Tommy Wiseau every time the man with the (forgive me) vision spoke.

Roxane says

This was a fascinating book about the making of the worst movie I have ever seen, *The Room*. And in reading this book I learned that *The Room* was made with all seriousness and not as, like, a parody of a bad movie. At the center of the narrative is Tommy Wiseau, a man who is secretive about his past, and everything in his life but who also wants to be a star, who wants, like all of us, to be seen and understood and loved. This book is fucking hilarious, told through the eyes of Tommy's friend and an actor in *The Room*, Greg Sestero (and his co-writer). Greg is a little smug but given the travails he shares throughout, that's kind of understandable. But this book is also heartbreaking and I found myself filled with tenderness for Tommy who is so misguided, and so deluded but who is, also, incredibly committed to an artistic vision he has little control of. Really, this is a story about loneliness and earnestness and *The American Dream*.

David says

Optimal mental health—if such a thing there be—probably lies somewhere roundabout midway on the self-awareness continuum, but often without thinking, people assume that 'not giving a fuck what other people think' is a sort of modern virtue, suggesting confidence, strength of character, and (if nothing else) the sheer convenience of living only for oneself. If we stop and scrutinize the concept, however, we soon realize that it's an ideal sorely in conflict with the fundamental nature of our lives: we are *social* beings, enmeshed in countless relationships with others, whether they are close friends and family members or strangers we find ourselves driving 75 MPH beside on the highway—both of us trusting that the other won't suddenly veer into our lane. We don't even consider these kinds of relationships because they are usually automatic; except maybe once in a while we marvel at the fact that we've survived however many years without some asshole harboring a death wish driving head-on into our car, killing us instantly. In the end there are just so many tacit (and fragile) rules holding this thing called society together.

What does this have to do with anything, you wonder. Well, *The Disaster Artist* by actor Greg Sestero and writer Tom Bissell happens to be about a self-styled actor-director named Tommy Wiseau, who, if the particulars of this book are accurate, may be the most un-self-aware person I have ever heard of (who is not a diagnosed psychotic). Wiseau's magnum opus (and *only* opus) *The Room* from 2003 provides more than enough evidence to support the case that the man has absolutely no understanding of how the world works and how he fits into it. (If you are unfamiliar with the film, I recommend it to you. It is without a doubt one of the worst films ever made—which of course makes it more entertaining than many, many films that are objectively speaking better than it. This 'highlight' reel will give you some indication what the film's like.)

I'm not implying that *anyone* should be limited by social conventions—but neither should one perhaps flout these conventions without understanding them... or at least being aware of them. It's as if Wiseau were dropped on the planet earth by an alien spacecraft and his only preparation for life on this planet was reading

the *Cliff's Notes* on human civilization. What else can you say about a strange-looking man of indeterminate age and origin who imagines that suddenly he can decide to be an actor, a screenwriter, and a film director without any of the necessary skills or qualifications? This is a man who is unable to assimilate normal casual human behavior in his day-to-day life; how can he hope to emulate other behaviors? Lacking much empathy in his real life, how will he empathize with the characters he will play? Can such a level of narcissism even crawl out from under the weight of its own immediacy?

Well, one logical solution is for the narcissist to write the role for himself—and to make that role as approximate to his own peculiar personality as is possible. He can go even one step further: he can position that self-characterization in a world that is entirely contrived to express his own childishly narcissistic agenda. As Sestero/Bissell points out in the book, one commentator said that *The Room* was essential a \$6 million daydream in which an adolescent mentality (i.e., Wiseau's) gets to act out his suicide and watch his friends mourn him and regret how poorly they've treated him. Was there any petulant teenager who didn't have this fantasy at some time? But not all of us had millions of dollars to pour into a vanity project that would literalize the fantasy.

The Disaster Artist is told from the perspective of Wiseau's co-actor in *The Room* and erstwhile friend Greg Sestero, a pretty-boy actor and former model who is (I believe) the only actor in the film that had a professional credit to his name. Sestero and Wiseau made for an odd couple. Sestero was young, tall, blond, and handsome while Wiseau was an eccentric raven-haired European, trollish in appearance and significantly older—although he would never reveal his actual age. The two met in acting class in San Francisco. Sestero was fascinated by the oddball Wiseau, whose acting was so bad that it beggared belief. After all, it's not easy to be *that* ostentatiously awful. But Wiseau was, and Sestero was intrigued.

Gradually, as Sestero gets to know him better, Wiseau becomes all the more mysterious. He won't discuss his past—or what he does for a living—or where he gets all his money—or where he was born—or how old he is. Sestero, whose mother is French, is convinced he is not French, based on his accent, but his accent is strangely indeterminate—a mongrel accent that's impossible to pinpoint. Naturally, Sestero's girlfriend, his mother, and his friends are all leery of Wiseau and advise him to steer clear.

As Sestero enjoys some limited measure of success in his career, their relationship becomes strained. Wiseau grows increasingly jealous of Sestero's auditions and his new friends. At one point when Sestero is dozing off on the sofa one night, Wiseau makes an ambiguous comment about sharing a bed. Is Wiseau in love with Sestero? Does he want to be Sestero? Suddenly Wiseau decides he's going to be an actor too—despite the fact that he's too old, too unattractive, and too untalented to embark upon a career. When he grows despondent from his lack of success in the acting biz, Wiseau elects to write, direct, and star in his own (self-financed) movie *The Room*, which is not only the self-aggrandizing vanity project to end all vanity projects; it's also a sort of revenge on everyone who rejected him—and even on Sestero himself.

The Disaster Artist surprised me. I expected it to have a lot of interesting gossip, but I didn't actually expect it to be a good book. And it is. If you need any more convincing, I stayed up until 3 AM last night finishing it, and I was so tired this morning that I took a vacation day at work. It's more than a behind-the-scenes tell-all, it's also an engrossing character study. I don't know to what extent this book is Sestero's and to what extent it's Bissell's, but Sestero's first-person persona is likable and generous to a fault, as he navigates the unforgiving and unending road to stardom and exposes this odd little man named Tommy Wiseau, who took a shortcut. Ironically, *The Room* did make Wiseau a 'star' of sorts, in the sense that infamy is a parallel route to celebrity.

Korey says

I am a super fan of The Room and I am obsessed with that mystical muppet Tommy Wiseau so of course I had to blow off work yesterday and read this book in one sitting the day it came out. I cannot keep my stupid comments in my pocket anymore. I have to review this masterwork. I had ridiculously high expectations for this book and I am happy to say it totally delivered. I don't know if I have ever laughed out loud so hard when reading a book in my life. This is so consistently funny I had tears in my eyes from laughing.

You will get lots of great behind the scenes info about this trainwreck production. There are also some poignant and insightful moments as Sestero unpacks his bizarre relationship with Wiseau. As for the man, the myth, the legend himself, this book provides a lot of info on what makes Wiseau tick without puncturing the air of mystery around him. I was worried Sestero might pull his punches given his ongoing relationship with Wiseau but he does not hold back.

While I read this book because of my fascination with the Room and Wiseau, Sestero's discussion of his own fledgling acting career outside of the Room was also surprisingly engaging. I became interested in him as a person as well, not just as a Wiseau information delivery system.

If I had one thing to change about this book I only wish it had been longer. It is so interesting you never want it to end. So stop playing tuxedo football and read it already, preferably in the company of your best friend and future wife. Definitely don't get breast cancer before you get to finish.

Lea says

I found this book incredibly sad.

Danger says

Oh man, I LOVED this. I usually don't read nonfiction, but the story surrounding the genesis and production of The Room is as fascinatingly bizarre as the movie itself. The story paints Tommy Wiseau as a megalomaniacal weirdo auteur, whose supreme lack of talent is only eclipsed by his unrelenting drive. Sure, this is partly a cautionary tale about unchecked hubris, but it's also a tribute to friendship and never-saying-die, and in that regard, the book is elevated way beyond mockery into something touching and a little bit profound. Before reading The Disaster Artist, I would've never guess that I'd end up thinking that Tommy Wiseau is someone we should all strive to be.

BONUS: I listened to the audiobook, narrated by Greg Sustero (Mark in the film) who does a PERFECT Tommy Wiseau impression anytime he reads any of Tommy's dialogue. It really added a layer of entertainment on top of an already interesting book.

Tom says

The Disaster Artist is an amazing book, and I don't mean that in the same way that people say the film *The*

Room is amazing, i.e., amazingly bad. I mean that it is actually a really amazing character study of one Tommy Wiseau, the wealthy, earnest and completely bizarre auteur behind what has been called "the Citizen Kane of bad movies." As is often the case, truth is stranger than fiction, and the character of Johnny from the film only scratches at the surface of the weirdness of the real-life Tommy.

Tommy speaks bizarrely broken English with a heavy Eastern European accent, but insists that he's from New Orleans. Tommy wants to be an actor even though he can't remember simple lines in a script that he wrote himself. Tommy always puts his phone on speaker so that he can record conversations with a cheap tape recorder and play them back later. Tommy is so secretive and paranoid that even after a number of years his close friend Greg is still clueless about whether he has any family or what he does for a living. Tommy is someone who steadfastly occupies his own reality and refuses believe anything else, real world evidence notwithstanding.

We meet Tommy through the eyes of his close friend, actor Greg Sestero. *Disaster Artist* is in fact Greg's memoir, not Tommy's biography, but there really is no better way to approach the subject, since verifying even simple biographical facts about Tommy is virtually impossible, let alone figuring out what's going on in his head. Seeing him from Greg's perspective helps to humanize him.

An aspiring actor in San Francisco, Greg meets Tommy at an acting class. Charmed by Tommy's fearless obliviousness to his lack of acting ability, Greg strikes up a friendship with Tommy, a friendship that will prove to be crucial for both men. Tommy will help jump-start Greg's acting career by renting him a cheap apartment in Los Angeles. And Greg will be Tommy's close friend, maybe his only friend, and help Tommy make the film which will make him infamous.

Intercut with this story is the making of *The Room* itself. If you haven't ever seen *The Room*, I urge you to do so immediately. It is a unique experience and laugh out loud funny. The film is sort of a love-triangle dramedy gone wildly off kilter. It's a story about chasing the American dream as it might be written by a space alien who had only read about such fantastic concepts as 'football', 'friendship' and 'emotions'. People spout nonsensical lines like "leave your stupid comments in your pocket", plot lines lead nowhere, continuity errors abound and characters are constantly and ham-handedly throwing footballs around for no reason.

Whatever strange confluence of events the viewer might imagine resulted in such a weird film, the truth is surely stranger. The sublimely ridiculous rooftop scenes were shot in a hastily erected set in a parking lot, despite the fact that Tommy owned an actual rooftop with gorgeous views of downtown San Francisco. Tommy routinely showed up for filming four hours late. He shot on both film and HD cameras simultaneously, even though he had no intention of using the HD footage. Actors were scared away from the casting process due to Tommy's insistence on meeting them at night in a parking lot. And famously, it would take hours and hours to get a passable take of many of Tommy's simplest lines even though he wrote them himself.

All of these bizarre stories and many more are faithfully recalled by Tommy's best friend on and off the screen, Greg Sestero, but the heart of the story is Sestero's friendship with Tommy. Sestero comes across as an unbelievably patient and forgiving friend, willing to let Tommy be his own weird self and encouraging him in his starry-eyed ambitions. This despite the fact that at times his friendship with the paranoid and secretive Tommy feels extremely toxic. Tommy is, after all, the guy who hired a documentarian to secretly spy on the cast and crew of the film.

Although Sestero makes it clear that he knows more of Tommy's story than he is willing to reveal, he does

drop hints of an extremely rough upbringing in Europe and the rocky road to fortune - and eventually fame, of a sort - in America. Still, much about Tommy remains mysterious. Where he originally came from, the nature of his business and what happened to his face are matters of guesswork.

Nonetheless, Sestero makes abundantly clear that the secret to 'The Room', the thing that makes it such a uniquely strange and riveting film, is that it's filtered through Tommy Wiseau's unique vision. Tommy Wiseau would be one of the great characters in literature, if he weren't completely real.

To their credit, Sestero and his co-author Greg Bissell do not approach their subject with a spirit of mockery. They treat Tommy as a genuine person, albeit a very unusual and fascinating one. Tommy has his highs of ebullient fearlessness and lows of manipulation and paranoia. Sestero and Bissell capture both in the style of the best documentarians painting a picture of a very complex and troubled individual.

This book is compulsively readable, one of the best character studies I've seen, and made me laugh out loud at several points. Watch *The Room* if you haven't seen it, then pick up *The Disaster Artist* immediately.

Kevin Kelsey says

Tommy Wiseau is a weird, weird dude who spent \$6 million of his own money to make a terrible, terrible movie.

Madeleine says

(This review was originally written for and posted at the Chicago Center for Literature and Photography's site. Again, I preordered this bad boy well before I knew I'd be writing about it for anyone other than myself and GR.)

In the long-running tradition of so-bad-it's-good entertainment, 2003's *The Room* is a fairly recent but impressively groan-worthy addition. Its low-budget approach to visual effects, a script held together by non sequiturs and the wealth of glaring continuity errors make it either instantly derided or ironically charming, depending on the viewer's stomach for shoddy craftsmanship and clueless defiance of cinematic etiquette.

For the enviably/unfortunately uninitiated, *The Room* is yet another take on the love-triangle template, offering up one more tale of a fellow whose quietly mundane existence will be predictably turned upside down by the barely concealed affair between his fiancée and best friend, the latter played by Greg Sestero, who also served as the flick's line producer. What sets *The Room* apart is its enthusiastic departure from the conventions that make a movie watchable. The acting is uneven, as even the more talented cast members could only do so much with the ridiculous script and inept director. *Dramatis personae* inexplicably come and go with all the finesse of a drunken hippopotamus, and they cling to and then disregard their motives with similarly contrary abandon. The dialogue is wooden at best and hilariously incoherent at worst. Plot lines are introduced, run with and cast off without resolution. In short, this is the very stuff that cult followings are made to immortalize, and the audience participation that screenings both public and private invite help to reshape this train wreck into sublime chaos.

While this book heralds itself as being Sestero's life inside *The Room*, *The Disaster Artist* reads more as Sestero's attempt to make sense of both writer/producer/director/lead actor Tommy Wiseau, depicted as an independently wealthy manchild who houses more insecurities than does a comprehensive guide to mental maladies, and his self-funded, self-promoted and self-delusional labor of love. Sestero, with enough writing assistance from journalist Tom Bissell to warrant a co-authorship, explores the torturous trajectory of *The Room* from nascence to its opening night, as well as the strained but symbiotic friendship between Wiseau and Sestero. Sestero's own faltering forays into Hollywood are chronicled as a sort of apologetic explanation for why he stuck with a project he clearly expected to fizzle into obscurity and stuck by a man who gave him both a place to live and an opportunity for work in exchange for the mind-bogglingly creepy way that Wiseau leeched off Sestero--the more successful actor and infinitely more attractive and youthful of the two--as if Sestero's good looks and acting chops were things he could possess for himself via sheer proximity.

Much of the book is devoted to recounting Wiseau's especially memorable bouts of weirdness, jealousies and general inability to function as an adult: Goading Sestero into nearly abandoning him just to prove that he has the power to offend; producing a demo reel fashioned nearly blow-for-blow from a scene in one of Sestero's other movies; spectacularly failing to remember the very lines he wrote; subjecting the whole of *The Room*'s creative team to his unnecessary and gratuitously filmed nudity; spending extravagantly on the film when he feels it's in the best interest of his vision but skimping on paychecks and other details he arbitrarily dismisses as minor.

To me, if not for a friend's firsthand assurance that Sestero is a genuinely likable guy who regards his accidental ascent to pseudo-fame with equal parts wry humor and gratitude, the book's tone--that of a young actor desperate to make it in L.A., whose naivete, curiosity and willingness to look beyond his vampiric guardian angel's downright hostile quirks all work together to cement an uneasy friendship that barely survives a disastrous attempt at living together--would be off-puttingly glib. Wiseau is painted as the perennial (though unintentional) sad clown who would be a tragic figure if not for his nigh unflappable hubris. But Sestero does, to his credit, try to soften his description of a man who has clearly suffered some obsessively guarded psychological setback that has seemingly forever grounded him in the defensive, combative mindset of a newly minted teenager. An example: All attempts to inject a hint of unscripted coherence in Wiseau's film are met with such disproportionate resistance and unfounded accusations that it's unsurprising the film went through several incarnations of its cast and crew; Sestero attempts to explain that, to the best of his understanding, Wiseau sees all attempts at changing his project for the better as mutinous trespasses, a threat to the tenuous authority he has purchased with his self-propelled picture. Even in the instances where Sestero seems inexplicably passive in his inability to assume control when Wiseau has lost all touch with reality, there is a strong undercurrent of desperately gleaned sympathy that keep his remembered interactions buoyantly surreal rather than needlessly cruel.

Still, the bulk of the book's humor is at Wiseau's expense, as it is impossible to read about his diva-sized antics, tantrums, paranoia and obstinate refusal to divulge personal details without cackling the nervous guffaws of tension-eroding disbelief because Wiseau's fiery outbursts are in no way proportional to their triggers. The *Sunset Boulevard* and *Talented Mr. Ripley* quotes that begin each chapter and, later, the copious nods to both films just may be the most perfect encapsulation of Wiseau within these pages. This is a man who is painted as sleepwalking through life, who literally cannot help how bizarre he is, who rewrites his own personal history as he sees beneficial.

The lingering effects of *The Disaster Artist* are an increased sense of respect for the hapless players at the mercy of Wiseau's deranged puppet master as well as a nagging suspicion that \$6 million can't quite buy talent but it sure can stack the odds in one's favor if one is hellbent on crafting a blockbuster from incoherence and birthing a star from a woeful dearth of thespian proficiency, reality be damned.

emma says

I was going to write a full review of this, but really everything I have to say boils down to the following list of directions.

One: Watch the movie "The Room." (IMMEDIATELY.)

Two: Read this book.

Three: See "The Disaster Artist."

Bonus points if you choose to listen to either of the How Did This Get Made? podcast episodes about it.

Double bonus points if you, like me, develop a crush on Jason Mantzoukas following the above.

That is all.

review to come

Simone says

Unlike the people rating a book they haven't read, I was fortunate enough to get my hands on an advance copy and have in fact read it, and as an avid fan of the 2003 cult hit, 'The Room' (I've seen it around 35 times) I can assure you it's everything I hoped it would be! Greg Sestero, star of the Room and Tommy Wiseau's right hand man (and line producer) reveals to us some of the greatest mysteries of the cinematic universe: how did this movie get made, and what is the deal with Tommy Wiseau? It switches back and forth between the history of Sestero's relationship with the enigmatic Tommy, and the making of 'The Room'. People unfamiliar with the movie and Tommy should be equally compelled by his portrayal, though they may find it hard to believe anyone actually talks like that and may think it's made up. I assure you, it is not.

When you watch The Room you are often left with a sinking feeling, just wishing you could hear more from Tommy in his often indecipherable accent, and on that count, this book really delivers with quote after quote of Tommy talk to fill that void. The way the story is told feels very honest, showing Tommy as both a tyrant and somewhat of an inspiration. Neither angle seems to have an agenda. It just feels like Sestero is telling it like it is.

I expect this book finds an audience with anyone who enjoys bizarre character studies even if they have not seen the 'The Room', but for anyone who has seen it ("at LEAST twice" - TW) it is essential reading which will have you laughing out loud and giddy over the revelations contained. While it would be impossible to answer every question the film raises, it comes through answering the majority of headache-inducing

questions this train wreck leaves in its wake. This book was not an accident. Everything was meticulously planned.

Nenia ? Queen of Literary Trash, Protector of Out-of-Print Gems, Khaleesi of Bodice Rippers, Mother of Smut, the Unrepentant, Breaker of Convention ? Campbell says

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Vox did a video about The Room recently with the co-author of this book, Tom Bissell, called *Why people keep watching the worst movie ever made*. He said of it in the interview: "**[The Room] is like a movie made by an alien who has never seen a movie but has had movies thoroughly explained to him.**"

That sentence is scarily appropriate, and goes a long way towards explaining why people thought this book was important enough that it not only deserved a book, but then a *second movie* based on that book. The story behind the movie's inception is almost as bizarre as the movie itself, if not more so.

In his memoir, Greg Sestero writes about how he met the creator of The Room, Tommy Wiseau in an acting class, intrigued by his odd behavior and pirate-like appearance. The book chronicles Sestero's own rise from minimum wage worker and discouraged aspiring actor to a B-list actor with a couple of serious roles under his belt. Meanwhile, in the background like the proverbial elephant, lurks The Room, and interwoven with Sestero's own narrative is the narrative of what it was like to be behind the set The Room..

And, of course, Wiseau's own narrative arc, as well.

Wiseau is one of those characters who is larger-than-life (hence the movie). At times he's hilarious and endearing, at other times, creepy and terrifying. His mood shifts made him difficult to work with and sometimes delayed production, because he had a vision and God help anyone who stood in the way of that. He basically funded this entire movie out of pocket, from a bottomless money hole that led some of the cast members to believe he had illicit ties to the mob. His history remains largely a mystery, although Sestero shares some of the details that he pieced together from the rare anecdote Wiseau thought fit to regale him with, and it seems like he was from an Eastern European country and became wealthy via the American Dream, by starting as a toy-seller in Fisherman's Wharf. Apparently his name is a corruption of Oiseau, which is French for "bird" (because the toys he sold were shaped like bird), although Wiseau himself does not appear to be French.

I really enjoyed this book a lot. It's darkly funny and utterly ridiculous. According to Vox, movies like The Room fall into a category of movies called "paracinema," because they're not typical movies and they are not really viewed by a typical audience. The Room, in particular, is a trash film - which I think is probably a nice way of saying "s***." It's funny, because while I was reading this, I was thinking about this documentary I watched a few years ago called Best Worst Movie (2009), which chronicles another trash film: Troll 2 (1990). I watched Troll 2 (although I haven't yet seen the room), and it's about as terrible as you might expect... but there is an *art* to that awfulness. The timing somehow works out to be so wrong, that rather than being scary, it ends up like a comedy.

My Wiki-hopping ended up taking me to a page of movies that are considered to be among the worst ever made. Troll 2 and The Room are both on it, but so are a number of movies that I actually *like*, such as The Avengers (not the superhero one), Batman & Robin, and Glitter. The Avengers is actually my favorite movie, B&R is my favorite Batman movie, and Glitter was my favorite movie when I was a middle schooler and didn't know any better. Showgirls is on there, as well, but Showgirls is basically the NC-17 version of Glitter, so as you can imagine, I also liked that movie, too. Apparently I have s*** taste in films. (But, again, according to that Vox article, liking trash films is apparently correlated with higher intelligence because they are "subversive." Which, now that I think about it, might go a long way towards explaining my attraction to bodice rippers and pulp.)

THE DISASTER ARTIST is the perfect length, in my opinion, and does a nice job balancing both Sestero's and Wiseau's stories. The humor is great, snappy, and witty, peppered with odd-ball humor that fits the subject. Sestero details his tempestuous relationship with Wiseau, and how he slowly but inevitably got dragged in on this crazy project along with the rest of the cast. You also get cool behind-the-scenes trivia, such as why certain lines were said, or why the outfits they're wearing are so weird, or why that one table in the living room is covered with framed pictures of spoons.

If you're at all interested in this movie, I highly suggest you read THE DISASTER ARTIST. Watching the movie isn't even necessary to enjoy it (I didn't), although I'm sure it helps. But if you want to feel like you've watched the movie without going through the effort, I urge you to watch CinemaSins's video, Everything Wrong With The Room In 8 Minutes Or Less.

What a crazy, crazy story.

4 stars
