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Dr. Strangelove/Fail Safe Response

In the films Dr. Strangelove and Fail Safe we see that both film's plots are centered on the same conflict, A rouge bomber that the united states has sent to bomb Moscow. Yes it is true that in both films the United States does everything that they possibly can to stop the plane and fails, but the outcome of the films are very different form each other. Although the bombs do manage to detonate in Russia, in the Dr. Strangelove movie you get the total annihilation of the planet as we know it via Russia Doomsday machine, yet on Fail Safe you get a very dark peace offering (New York City) that saves the world of total destruction. Ironically you get a better outcome in the more serious movie than you do in the more comedic one.

One of the differences is that in Fail Safe the humanity of both the Russian Premier and the US President overcome and they manage to come to an agreement that will save both from a total all out death war. The agreement basically describes the saying an “eye for an eye”. I believe that the president looked at the options that he had and although he had to give the orders to bomb New York City, I think we can assume that in the movie Fail Safe, both Russia and the United States had finally reached a level of peace. I think once they realize just how much damage a nuclear warfare will cause, everyone will decide to disarm or at least put away their nuclear weapons.

In the Dr. Strangelove movie you get a much different result at the end of the film. Unlike Fail Safe, there is no compromise that saves the world from destruction. By the end of the movie both countries are cooperative, but it doesn't matter because the doomsday machine has already decided the outcome of the film. Once the bomb was released with Major Kong riding it, it was over. Even if the Russians wanted peace and where willing to accept a major US city in return, it did not matter because according to them, their doomsday machine was automatically activated, so the nuclear retaliation on the United States was inevitable. At the end we get shots of many nuclear bombs going off. I can only assume that in the end, both the United State and Russia launched all their arms and destroyed the world.

I think the most noticeable difference in the movies is the way the producers approached each film. Although both movies deal with the ideas of nuclear warfare, Fail Safe takes a much more serious approach from the begging of the film to the end while Dr. Strangelove uses satire to state its points. I think this is most displayed on the last scene of both films which although almost exactly the same they have different impacts. Both of the main pilots general Kong and General Black die in the end of their respective films, but in totally different ways. Major Kong goes down riding the nuclear warhead in his cowboy hat which resembles a very American image of a cowboy on his horse, you could say he dies a proud patriot of the US.

General Black also dies in Fail Safe, but it in a much darker way than major Kong. Kong went out happily thinking in his mind that he was going to be a hero that that killed many soviets. General Black on the other hand has to bomb his own country and the idea that he killed off so many innocent people is too much for him to handle so he commits suicide on the spot, even before the bomb detonates. The second that he is given the orders to bomb the united states, he realizes the burden that the bombers will have to undertake, so in an act of bravery he tells the other bombers that only he, and he alone will release the bombs. Both Generals willingly sacrifice their lives, but for different reasons. General black seeks the success of America to prevail in the war against Russia, while General Black understands that the decision that the president took was the most peaceful.

Both of these movies are great movies, but I think that Fail Safe prevails now a day as the film that better portrayed just how big of a threat that nuclear war would have been. The sincerity of the characters and the realistic events that occur in the fail-safe almost make it feel as if it was something that you could have made a documentary out of. Dr. Strangelove on the other hand, take its satirical route almost mocking the possible events that might occur. Although not as appealing to me, during the moment that both films where released Dr. Strangelove was accepted more than Fail Safe because of its comedic taste because it was better to make a joke out of something this horrible than to think of it as something that was going to happen.