“Subtle” is not a word that can be used at any point in the latest film to take us back to the 1980s, “The A-Team”. Nor is “Intelligent” or “Deep”. But “Fun”, on the other hand, is a perfect one word description of this little slice of popcorn heaven. It’s like having that one margarita too many at a summer evening’s get together with friends, you will feel bad about it the next day, and in a week’s time you’ll wonder what the hell you were thinking…but for the moment, you really enjoyed yourself; so who is to say that it was that wrong?

This movie had two very negative things for me going in: First was that I was never that big of a fan of the television show. I watched it for over a year, and then got disgusted by the fact that almost every episode was exactly the same as every other. You also had one very good actor in George Peppard as Col. Hannibal Smith, but after that there wasn’t much talent in the show…especially Mr. T., who makes Megan Fox look like Meryl Streep in comparison, acting-wise.

The second negative was director Joe Carnahan; a man who might rival Michael Bay in the suckiness department…if he had a few more films under his belt. Two words succinctly sum up why I dislike him so: “Smokin’ Aces”.

So imagine my surprise when this movie kicks right off with a rousing action sequence that was brainless…but a hell of a lot of fun to watch, as we are introduced to the events that lead to the forming of the team, as Hannibal and Lt. Templeton "Face" Peck (Bradley Cooper) are in a bit of a jam, bailed out by two people they meet on the way; B.A. Baracus (Quinton "Rampage" Jackson) and the mental hospital committed Captain Murdock (Sharlto Copley). It's a ludicrous action sequence, but who cares? It does do a nice job in setting up some facts for later on; especially B.A.'s well documented fear of flying.

Flash forward six years, and the team of Army Rangers is wrapping things up on their rotation in Baghdad. They are being asked by the DoD NOT to assist the CIA in obtaining some missing counterfeit plates…it is supposed to be handled by a Blackwater type group of contract soldiers. On the other hand, Hannibal's oldest friend, General Morrison (well played by veteran TV actor Gerald McRaney), thinks his team would do it better, a feeling shared by the shady CIA operative "Lynch" (Patrick Wilson). No, it didn't make much sense to me either, but you just have to continue to get over that while watching this film.

Most everyone knows the story from there; the team is set up, catches all of the blame when things go wrong, and they are all sent to prison. From there comes the elaborative stunts required for breaking each one of them out, allowing them to get on with all of the other crazy action sequences needed to clear their names.

The escapades themselves are nothing more than excuses to blow things up and show off the macho charm of all four characters; "Mission Impossible" type schemes with quite a bit more firepower. Still, they are amazing to watch…especially the scene where their C-130 plane is blown up by drones, so they fall to earth in an M-1 tank and its parachutes, using the cannon as a navigating tool. It might be the dumbest thing I've ever watched, but I was smiling all the way.

I can't really say I was smiling at the last set piece, however, as hackmaster Carnahan just went Plain Stupid on the logic of the last scenes, evidently realizing that he was near the end of the shoot, and still had another $25 million worth of pyrotechniques remaining, so it was time to use them all in a confusing mishmash of explosions, firefights, and "deception" that fooled no one.

As hinted at earlier, this is not a movie to go to if you like character development and finely written dialog. However, to the credit of the actors, they did have excellent chemistry. Liam

Neeson, as I would have expected, was excellent as Hannibal. He established his “action hero” credentials last year in the surprise hit “Taken”, and he plays that up here. You wouldn’t expect a thin, 6’ 4” Irishman in his late 50s to pull this type of role off, but he does it well. Just as George Peppard added gravity to the TV series as the senior mentor (and established film actor in his own right), Neeson is the glue that holds it all together. He also does a great job in establishing Hannibal as the mentor to the other three young men, and their respect and admiration for him shines through.

The rest of the team feed off from Neeson’s lead. While Bradley Cooper’s character Face doesn’t have half the depth that was seen with his Phil character from “The Hangover”, it still worked in context. Likewise, former MMA fighter “Rampage” Jackson showed something that Mr. T never did; some level of acting talent. B.A., as played by Jackson, isn’t much different than the character we remember from the TV show...but he wasn’t the walking joke that Mr. T ended up making him, (especially when the TV show mistakenly ended up making B.A. the focus of the show; sadly illuminating the former bouncer’s total lack of ability).

The foursome is wrapped up ably by the inspired casting of the South African Sharlto Copely as “Howling Mad” Murdock. Copely, who burst on the scene last year in the critically acclaimed “District 9”, is a treat to watch as the mentally unstable pilot-savant. Unlike the TV show, which had Dwight Schultz's “ailment” fade in and out as inconsistently as Kevin Costner’s English accent in “Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves”, Copely plays Murdock as truly nuts…even when he is flying something. What I enjoyed most from his performance was how he constantly shifted into different accents, often for no apparent reason…and once for a really good reason; needing to suddenly speak fluent Swahili to cover a customs glitch when they were given incorrect phony passports.

BTW, one little bit of trivia...Dwight Schultz is the one member of the orginal cast to appear in this movie; in a cameo as a doctor in one of the hospitals Murdock is held in.

Jessica Biel shows up to add some “romance” and a little “babe factor” in her role as the DoD captain (and former Face Peck lover) trying to track down the boys, but she’s pretty much just there for decoration, although I thought she handled it very well. The same with Patrick Wilson as “Lynch”…one of those stock TV characters you always see in these types of stories; ones who you can figure out from a mile off.

Despite myself, I still completely enjoyed this movie. It is comfortable with itself as strictly

popcorn entertainment, and given the total crap we've seen so far this summer, it was a welcome relief to be able to go into the theater and then come out two hours later with a smile on my face…even if I was feeling guilty about it.

**My Rating: Bill Nelsen (2 ½ footballs)**