Ben Swearingen

Dr. Champion

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*Boyz n the Hood* (1991) Review

John Singleton’s directorial debut, *Boyz n the Hood* (1991), attempted to tackle large, politically charged themes through the lens of three main characters: Tre, Doughboy, and Ricky. These three characters, along with the supporting cast, are compelling, well-acted, and nuanced. This is where the film shines. The screenplay successfully tackles these race issues through characters the audience can relate to, or at least empathize with.

The film chugs along, letting us understand the characters and problems they deal with before the story takes a turn. This intelligent pacing is another commendable thing the screenplay does. We feel the impending doom, the violence on the doorstep, while getting to know and love the characters; it creates a very suspenseful atmosphere. I found myself almost pleading with the film: is there a way these characters could escape the inevitable?

When Ricky meets his demise, you feel a pit in your stomach. The scene is heart-wrenching and does not shy away from its horror. Singleton made the smart decision to keep this section of the film mostly in real time. You see every gory detail. Tre watches his death. Doughboy brings the body back home. Ricky’s mother and wife weep. Tre snaps and goes to get his father’s gun. It’s a shocking sequence that felt like watching a bomb go off after anticipating the countdown.

The technical aspects of the film help craft this impending doom as well, especially the sound design. In almost every scene you can hear the distant sounds of gun shots or helicopters. The characters rarely react to these sounds, communicating to the audience the constant violence of this world without saying a word.

*Boyz n the Hood* was almost impeccable. Such an expertly crafted film, I almost forgot that Cuba Gooding Jr. looks nothing like a high school-aged teen. Any other fault I found in the film resulted from me wanting more from the screenplay. How does Tre’s relationship with his mother and father continue? What happens to Ricky’s son? Why does the Dooky character chew a pacifier? Usually, I hate epilogues or text ending a film, but with this story it seemed fitting. Doughboy would die two weeks later. The cycle continues.