Edward Scissorhands – A Haunting Fairytale

Against the glitter, glamour, punk and grunge of the early 90s appeared the awkward but lovable character of Edward Scissorhands. Premiering in LA on the 6th of December 1990, the movie became a box office smash – grossing over $150 000 (U.S) on its opening weekend. Praises and acclaims bombarded the film. After all this hype is the movie a merefad or is it a masterpiece filled with substance?

Director Tim Burton creates a superb fairytale ambience with the use of a brightly coloured set. Set in modern day suburbia the film wittily parodies suburban life. The characters are all over-the-top stereotypes, that is, all except for Edward. The casting is done fittingly, Johnny Depp’s performance as Edward has the capacity to make an audience laugh and cry.

The film tells the tale of an outsider struggling to fit in. When kind-hearted Peg (Diane West) finds Edward, a man with scissors for hands, living in isolation she brings him home. Edward’s arrival causes a buzz, the neighbours accept him with open arms and his sculpting talent wins everybody’s heart. Edward’s own heart is set on Kim (Wynona Ryder). Like all good things this doesn’t last as, after he is framed for robbery the neighbours turn on him. Edward and Kim’s love grows stronger but his situation goes from bad to worse...

The story can be described as a dark fairytale. Accompanied by enchanting music composed by Danny Elfman the movie is emotionally charged. The mood is often haunting and the evocative ending is sure to leave any audience reflecting for hours.

The film is captivating as it’s easy to step into the unique world Tim Burton creates and the characters are easy to understand and empathise with. Although the idea of an inceptor creating a man with scissors for hands is fantastical there are a lot of deep themes that can be related to such as uniform societies, self-discovery, fear of the unknown, tall poppy syndrome, the power of love.

The film is an infusion of different genres - comedy, fable, fantasy, romance, sorrow, horror, fairytale etc. - but it is by no means formless. The movie is well structured, it tells the tale clearly and cleverly seeps into flashbacks. Ultimately the movie is wonderfully composed and likely to be enjoyed by all, particularly younger audiences because of the fantastical elements. So, no, it seems the movie is not just a hyped up fad, it was and still remains a masterpiece.

Grade Commentary

Terry has produced a sophisticated and highly effective film review. The well-structured review shows an extensive understanding of the film, the techniques used by the director and the film’s conceptual underpinning. The expression is fluent and accurate, with good use of rhetorical questions.

Terry’s response demonstrates characteristics of work typically produced by a student performing at grade A standard at the end of Stage 5.