

Pretty Kids With Problems: Across The Universe (DVD Review)

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This one is a little late, but oh well, better late than never.

Actually, I wish it were never now that I've seen Julie Taymor's atrocious "Across The Universe".

The film (and I use that term very loosely) is about a guy from Liverpool (his name is Jude....cute) who travels to America in search of his father. After a brief encounter with his wayward daddy, he meets Max (I'm pretty sure he's named after "Maxwell's Silver Hammer", but don't quote me) - who goes to Princeton, but would rather be a layabout bohemian. What a waste of money on education that is.

So Max has a sister -- of course her name is Lucy -- and she has a boyfriend who ends up dying in Vietnam (I really would prefer no one ever see the movie again, so I don't care about spoilers), so she's all moody and suffering, except that you really don't care because she's pretty much a spoiled brat who at one point compares having kids to wanting little clones of yourselves because everyone is *that* big of an egotist. In other words, she's a bitch and we're supposed to like her.

We end up meeting other characters, like Prudence the lesbian (who mopes about and whose sole reason for being created is so everyone can sing "Dear Prudence" to her later on), Sadie the Janis Joplin sing-a-like, and Jo Jo the Jimi Hendrix act-a-like. Just so you know, none of these characters are redeemable. All of them are selfish, none of them think of consequences, and none of them are really that likeable. They all seem to act as though the world is falling at their feet, but they all put themselves in those positions, and really, none of them are that hard up except for Max (who ends up being drafted into the war).

Back to Jude, who starts to fall for Lucy. I'm not really sure why. I guess because she's pretty and he's pretty they should be together by default. There's nothing to suggest that either of them spent any significant time with each other to know relatively anything about the other one.

Because the main plot is so boring and unoriginal, the director (who glides through the film with an air that her shit doesn't stink in the slightest) tries to cover the poor plot up by doing visual gymnastics with a Beatles soundtrack, and doesn't care at all that she's butchering classic music.

The worst part in the entire film is during a musical number involving Max in Vietnam. He and his fellow soldiers carry the Statue of Liberty on their shoulders while singing the lyrics "she's so heavy" in such an obvious over-the-top moment where you can pretty much feel the director's thinking that this was a smart, artistic shot. Upon viewing it, it's a laughable

moment that made me roll my eyes at the sheer ridiculousness of it.

Just so the film could get even more pretentious, Jude is an artist who paints and draws on the walls in their shitty New York apartment -- complete with the obligatory bohemian-hippie decor that you find in all movies based in the 60's that take themselves way too seriously.

To add to the already overbearing pretentions, all of them get high and go into a transcendental state complete with crazy visions. Bono plays an Andy Warhol/Timothy Leary mish-mash character, and Eddie Izzard plays the circus ringmaster during the number to "Being For The Benefit of Mr. Kite!"

For some reason, this incident makes Lucy start taking things seriously and magically becomes an important anti-war protestor. I always find it funny in some films when a character goes from knowing nothing of what's going on to being on stage in 2nd or 3rd command and really ultra-important all of a sudden. She must have slept with someone to get that high up that quickly.

Jude gets jealous that Lucy has a life away from him, I guess, 'cause really the jealousy makes little sense, and he goes from understanding lad to angry and frustrated really fucking quick, but I guess there has to be conflict somewhere in there, 'cause there sure as shit isn't anything else going on.

Max comes back from the war and apparently isn't crazy with post-traumatic stress, and the director wants us to know that she hasn't made a cliched statement or anything (like she hadn't done it fifty times before it).

Back to the boring pretty lovers, as Jude gets put in jail and his dad bails him out, but he has to go back to England. That lasts a little while so that he can sulk and cry thirty years before emo kids made it popular. Then without explanation, he goes back to America to be with Lucy.

While all this stuff with the two main characters is going on, there's this whole subplot with Sadie and Jo Jo about their band breaking up and I'm supposed to care about it, but I really, really don't. She gets a record deal without the band, but her new guitar player doesn't have "soul" so she decides to go back to Jo Jo. Okay....moving on....

Sadie and Jo Jo's band get in trouble for playing on a rooftop, but Jude decides to fuck the law and go up and sing anyway. This is his way of getting Lucy back. I guess it works. The real message is that if you want to butcher a song, you might as well go all the way to do it. Start at the top to impress the girl.

I have read some reviews of this film by other critics. Roger Ebert gave it **** and put it in his top ten list. I believe that Roger (with all due respect) was still on heavy medication when he reviewed this big, steaming pile of pretentious art fag bullshit.

In closing, this is the worst film of the year for me thus far, and it will be hard for anyone to beat it. The boring main plot, the horrible renditions of Beatles' songs, the art-for-the-sake-of-art filmmaking all make this a wretched unbelievably overrated turd. It was like a GAP commercial for 60's apparel. I've already seen a high concept musical with a basic love story and an already-made pop soundtrack -- it was Baz Luhrman's "Moulin Rouge!" and it was way, way better; even if the love story was as syrup as it gets, I still liked the characters far more in that one.

"All you need is love." This film needed more than love, it needed a lobotomy.