

Revisionist Review: Why I Love My Women Little

Contributed by trc
Monday, 28 April 2008

Admit it. Come on, admit it. This was the movie that stole your heart as a tween, just like it did mine when I was but a little lad living in the suburbs of Denver, Colorado after my folks moved here from Dublin, Ireland. You experienced this film as I did like some jelly bean of puffy magic and allowed it to rip at your heart with its historic portrayal of life during the sexual revolution of the 1960s. But being as how I wasn't alive during the 1960s, I don't know if the movie did a fair or accurate job at portraying that culture or time period. But what I do know for absolute certain when it comes to Little Women is this: The film was a huge catapulting success for such rising stars as Winona Ryder, Kirsten Dunst, Claire Danes, Christian Bale, Carrot Top, and Eric Stoltz.

And if that's not enough to get you interested into watching this gem treasure, consider this: It was made in 1994!

And that being the case, it's not so far-fetched to believe this movie (just like the novel it was based upon) is a classic. But is it fair to call this movie a classic? Does it really, truly stand the test of time? Just because it was based off a hit novel from 100 years ago doesn't necessarily mean it should automatically qualify or be considered the Second Coming (though Winona's presence certainly does help it in that category).

So where does it stand on the scales of time?

I'm glad you asked. This is my revisionist review for Little Women; my chance to explore those questions and more. And just like I did in school when forced to write a review of the novel this film is based on, I'm going to just wing every detail and pretend like I've actually seen it.

Don't get me wrong, though. I had every intention of actually watching this one (unlike most of the cult classics I review, which I generally enter into while kicking and screaming for life). I initially set out to rent the legendary flick at Blockbuster so I could see for myself whether this movie was still any good or not and then let all of you know if you should rent it. Sadly, they didn't have the movie there, so I was forced to watch an old VHS copy with bad audio and occasional frame skips. The audio was so bad, in fact, that I had to mute the movie through pretty much the entire thing. But even though I couldn't hear what was going on, I have a pretty good idea as to what the plot was about as I paid very careful attention to all the small details and pieced together the story of Little Women for myself. What I found was an exciting journey of mystery, romance, horror, and the occasional moment of not knowing what the hell was going on.

For those of you unfamiliar with both the book and the feature it is based upon (like myself), here is a brief rundown of the story:

So the first scene of the movie takes place in a big house. I know this because there was an establishing shot of the exterior before we moved inside. We quickly find that this is the house where Winona Ryder, Claire Danes, a third girl I don't recognize, and a very young Kirsten Dunst reside. An older woman comes in and it's likely this is their grandmother because they're all very taken with her and it looks as though they haven't seen each other in a very long time. She sits down with a note and starts reading it with them. They all huddle together and read it with her. And so they read. And read. And read. And I don't know what they were reading, obviously, but it could have been something very important to the rest of the movie, because this is the last

scene that really made any sense to me.

As we go on, the four girls are eventually eating in a kitchen (so if this was a scene from the book, you'll notice the accurateness involved in portraying the novel on screen). Kirsten Dunst starts to steal the food, but then she puts it back (either by change of heart in some twist of morally complex side-plot I missed out on or as a direct result of a verbal scolding from an off screen character I couldn't hear). The four main characters leave the house at this point and start dancing down the snow-covered streets. Suddenly, Christian Bale rides by on a buggy, possibly heading to the Bat Cave since that's always my first thought when I see Christian Bale in any form of vehicle riding by.

I found this to be a very violent movie, over all, though. I mean, there was a lot of excessive violence. For instance, there's one scene where Winona Ryder burns one of the other girls (possibly on purpose). Later, she tries to strangle Kirsten Dunst (who is only a child, for Pete's sake). And it wasn't the kidding kind of strangling... it was hardcore. While possibly this film shouldn't be viewed by minors, it may suit the individual who enjoys watching a bunch of women beat the crap out of each other for two hours.

Almost instantly, we're transported to a different scene and are watching the girls drinking tea while dressed up like men. The movie could be about transvestites, but this is really the only scene like this so it's unlikely. A little later on, Winona Ryder is dressed like Captain Hook in a scene very similar to this, though. They spend a lot of time talking while dressed in costumes and I'm assuming they are acting in Peter Pan but I'm not sure if Peter Pan was around at the time this movie takes place... so that could be a factual error on the part of the novelist (even though she wrote this during the time period it's based, I believe). They are possibly preparing for a town play, though we never get to see it performed live for some reason. It's at this point I begin to theorize the movie is about an acting troupe dubbed "Little Women" since they're all women and maybe only act in little plays.

But when it comes to the story, all you need to know is that Winona and Christian Bale dance at a party, Kirsten Dunst falls into a hole, Batman saves her, and Claire Danes starts getting very sick and can barely walk in some scenes (she might have been playing an old woman, but if so the costuming department really sucked). Then we follow Winona and seemingly leave the other girls behind. She meets the guy who played Satan in End of Days while eating at what looks to be like a hotel. While there, she writes a play that apparently gets performed and that's where she starts to apparently be courted by Satan.

Again, this movie is not suitable for kids.

Batman seems to be in love with Winona Ryder, as well, but then eventually falls in love with some blonde chick who is apparently very rich. But the new girl also apparently knows Winona Ryder, because at the end they are very excited to see each other. It was very confusing.

Then all of a sudden Winona is with Claire Danes and Claire is sick again. Suddenly, Claire Danes is crying and so Winona Ryder is crying too and that meant I started crying because nobody warned me this was apparently a sad movie. But then it gets better and Winona runs into the rain to meet with Satan and I guess that was a happy ending?

As for the characters, it's hard to say what their relation is... but I'm willing to bet it ranges anywhere from them being members to the same acting troupe to them being orphans living in a boarding house. I'll let you be the judge, because you've probably actually seen the movie and know.

Anyway, while not always coherent as far as films go, this movie did seem to have what it takes to be considered a classic: It starred a bunch of people who weren't as famous then as they are today, it involved lots of random acts of violence, and it had a scene take place around a piano where everyone was singing a song together. Over all, it's hard to argue with those merits, so I won't even bother trying. So you ask final verdict?

I say Classic Film.

But on a sidenote, if you happen to watch this movie with audio, let me know what it's really about. It looked worthy of a rental, but frankly I'm low on cash and I don't like wasting my money on trash. So if this movie is a piece of crap, please let me know because I don't want my reputation ruined here. Anyway, with all these things in mind, I rule that Little Women stands the test of time.

Little Women gets an official 100 out of 100!