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PajuahPurnellProfessorChildressENG102119January 2018 Who's the Master?

TheLast Dragon (1985) TheLast Dragon by director Michael Schultz is a martial arts comedy released in 1985 that is a spoof of one of the most famous karate movies ever: Enter the Dragon. This movie was filmed as a comedic re-launch of the Bruce Lee film that was released in 1973.

Berry Gordy, who is the film's executive producer along with Schultz, have managed to incorporate comedy, drama, and karate romance all into one. Despite that it did not look very modern when it opened, this martial arts musical is still a memorable 80s classic that included these three things: "the guy always does the impossible to get the girl, the good guy wins the big fight at the end, and finally the main point of the story is just simply an everyday lesson" (Kruse) The film focuses on Bruce Leroy (Taimak) in Harlem. He is told by his Miyagi that he needs to find the Master in order to obtain a glow or a type of higher spiritual plane. Being at peace is part of his training, so he chooses not to fight his arch-rival Sho'nuff, the Shogun of Harlem. However, Leroy also finds himself distracted by Laura Charles (Vanity), a disco queen whom he rescues from thugs sent by a wannabe mobster Eddie Arkadian (Chris Murray).

"Leroy finds that the non-violent path is not an easy one to walk and sooner or later he must face his destiny" (Yousef). Schultz (dir.) "with the backing of Motown mogul Berry Gordy, the film's mid-1980s dance and up-tempo tunes are appealing but the story and characters make it mediocre" (Donalson 89). The tone of the film unfolds in a goofy, fun vibe. The movie is not meant to be taken seriously, The Last Dragon sends its message in a more light-hearted manner.

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Schultz (dir.) mentions in the DVD commentary that he wanted the film to be 'cartoony', "through the use of either of bright, pastel colors or flat-looking dance performance numbers set on soundstages" (Donalson 89).

The Last Dragon "further suffers from pointless dialogue and kooky characters that alternate between fantasy and stupidity. In one part of the dialogue Leroy is speaking in a simplistic, broken English to highlight his adaptation of Chinese manners. Leroy's expression of mystical ideas and thoughts is frequently described by his rival as 'mumbo jumbo'" (Donalson 89). In general, the other characters in the film remain animated and bland, disappointing an audience to care about them in any degree.

Finally, Melvin Donalson stated "one would expect back then this film as an expensive, high-tech production". But, this does not make up for its weaknesses with the action sequences. Even though Schultz (dir.

) does a decent job directing these moments, nothing stands out in performance or intensity. "In some ways, the scheme of showing actual Bruce Lee footage works against The Last Dragon" (Donalson 90).

Despite that the story calls for the character, Leroy, "to mimic the physical moves of his idol Bruce Lee, the fight sequences of The Last Dragon remain only a shallow copy of action seen elsewhere" (Donalson 90). I would give the rating a 3 out of 5 since this is a classic I grew up on in terms of music and comedy but the special effects and story line could have been better. For the overall message of the film Schultz (dir.) hoped that "presenting a young black heroic character who had values and had positive training, being seen as a corn ball character by other people but ultimately believing in his own

power, could overcome evil, would be a thing that would resonate with youthful audiences”, and it did (Axmaker, para. 9).

Being someone living in a generation where movies have to make sense, a typical person would simply ask these two questions: Is it just a 80s ninja flick? Is it just a long music video? Overall, I would recommend it if you want a laugh but do not try to figure out the actual point of this cult

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