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One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest - Review

The film is a comedy-filled dramatic tragedy that was based on Ken Kesey's novel, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

While the film version of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* received seven Academy Awards and was nominated for nine, the film has gotten positive feedback, along with negative feedback, due to the way it follows the plot of the book, or rather - doesn't follow the plot of the book.

Kesey himself went to the grave without ever watching the film based on the novel he wrote, and even went as far as suing for 5% of the movies gross and \$800,000 in punitive damages.

Watching the movie after reading the book myself, I am able to understand Kesey's reasoning. Kesey did not believe Jack Nicholson was good for the part of Randle McMurphy; which makes perfect sense as to why. In the book, McMurphy is portrayed with red hair, which is a very strong piece of unique characterization on Kesey's part.



Not only was the casting of McMurphy's role in the film problematic, but the protagonist shift that occurred book to film as well. As seen in the book, Chief Bromden, a (not so) "deaf and

dumb” Indian is the narrator, as the whole story of the ward is seen through the eyes of Chief.



Though the movie is seen in McMurphy’s perspective, with Chief hardly being acknowledged until the end. This caused several major plot points to be missed. For example, the fishing trip that takes place in the book when Chief revealed to McMurphy that he is not, in fact, deaf and dumb and he goes on the fishing trip.

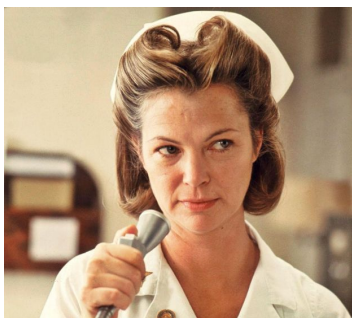
While in the movie, Chief doesn’t attend the fishing trip, and doesn’t reveal his secret to McMurphy until after the fishing trip takes place.

Another troublesome point that the film completely missed, was a character death; which isn’t exactly something that can be left out without shaking things up a bit, especially since this death was a big turning point for some of the characters which also lead up to the climax of the book. Cheswick’s suicide not only gave us insight to Cheswick’s character himself, but also gave us an idea of how the ward works, considering things went on like normal, as if nothing happened. This occurrence being neglected in the film resulted in a lack of comprehension of the story as a whole.



Though there were several missed points in the film, there was also a few things that the film did extremely well, despite the strange switching up of things and odd casting of characters. (Danny DeVito? Really?)

The casting of Nurse Ratched was pleasantly unexpected. As in the book I matched her ugly personality to her appearance, it is important to take note that appearances doesn’t always match a personality. Also, the choice of her hair style spoke numbers, as it made her look as though she had horns adorning her head, given the evil that she is underneath. Louise Fletcher, the actress that played Nurse Ratched, did an exceptional job portraying facial expressions and voice changes while experiencing loss of power, which was an extremely important point of the plot.



A scene in the film that was done unbelievably well, was when Nurse Ratched tore down Billy Bibbit. This scene was something that was better seen than read, as the film provided. As Billy had a night of fun with Candy, his confidence level had gone up tremendously, and an obvious lack of his usual stutter had occurred. He even showed a strong stance against Nurse Ratched; that is until she asked Billy what his mother would think. This ripped Billy at the edges and viewers were able to see a



physical breakdown as he lost all confidence and his stutter came back full force. Billy had to be dragged away kicking and screaming at Nurse Ratched not to tell his mother. This showed Ratched's true colors as we were able to see what lows she would reach, just to regain the power that she had lost over the ward. After Billy had committed suicide, Nurse Ratched had told the patients it would be best if they all went on with their daily routines, giving that the routine is what granted Nurse Ratched easy access to manipulating the patient's as nothing ever changed.

Lastly the overall message was received as Chief ended up escaping the ward as it had occurred in the book. This scene was done very well and was a very emotional ending of the film. It was



wrapped up tight and was the (somewhat) happy ending that Chief deserved. Though he unfortunately had to smother McMurphy to death after he was left completely unresponsive after he had a lobotomy in order to escape. The christ figure theme that seemed to be missed a bit through the film, had made an appearance here as his life was sacrificed in order for Chief to live on. The film ended with a bang and Chief's character had reached its full development at this

point leaving viewers teary eyed and proud of the massive Indian for finally believing he was big.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest though failed to meet the authors requirements, it did do some things well. Typically people who do not read the book enjoy the movie much more than those who have, considering the missing pieces tend to anger many readers. Overall the film was great especially for the time period, though it had a lot of things that separated it from the original story written by Ken Kesey.