

Quentin Tarantino's Jackie Brown a disappointment

by Kristi McKim
features editor

Quentin Tarantino's latest effort, *Jackie Brown*, will unfortunately disappoint those who are expecting another *Reservoir Dogs* or *Pulp Fiction*. Lacking the upbeat, quick-paced action and dialogue of his past films, *Jackie Brown* is rather slow and dragging.

Though the overall impression of the film is thoroughly disappointing, the quality acting, groovy music, and final forty minutes save the movie from being an entire disaster.

Pam Grier returns to the screen in fine form, as she plays the film's title role, Jackie Brown. She's wonderful as the no-nonsense, savvy airline stewardess, whose confidence allows her a certain courage against and resistance to "authority" figures (whether that "authority" is the ATF or underground bosses). Her wit and guts grant her the ability to sweet-talk and out-smart significant threats to her career and life.

Samuel L. Jackson brings a gritty honesty to his low-down character, Ordell Robbie—a conniving, ruthless man who'll stop at nothing to maintain his successful "career" of selling illegal weapons. In some scenes,

he is quite intimidating, as his character threatens both the characters on-screen as well as the film's audience. Jackson, in his second Tarantino movie, proves his tremendous acting ability lies in his smooth-talking, raw-edged performance.

This film also marks the return of Robert Forster to the big screen. As Max Cherry, bail bondsman, Forster lends a real innocence and charm to his character. Whether boldly singing to the Delfonic's or nervously serving as Jackie Brown's conspirator, Forster's character is truly likable.

In supporting roles, Bridget Fonda (who plays Ordell's "apartment-mate" Melanie Ralston) and Robert DeNiro (in the role of ex-con Louis Gara, Ordell's soon-to-be-partner) provide humorous depictions of perpetually high, thoroughly-apathetic characters. Unfortunately, though, such small, easy roles do nothing to maximize the talents of both DeNiro and Fonda. While they do a nice job in their portrayal of such wasted characters, their acting does not necessarily highlight their own talents.

As always, Tarantino constructs a carefully-thought, intricately-inter-twined narrative which makes smart

use of time and point of view.

By shooting the same scene from varying points of view, Tarantino allows the audience to understand to a greater extent the story's sequence of events; but this works to his advantage only in the final forty minutes of the film. Until this point, the movie drags relentlessly; Tarantino takes far too long to establish the context for the film's climax.

Thankfully, many familiar, groovy songs of 70s soul accompany the otherwise dull action—thus helping to maintain the audience's attention during moments of boredom.

For the most part, the film is rather neatly-constructed. Typical of Tarantino's films, the dialogue is entirely clever, fresh, and snappy (not to mention, quite funny at times). But, if you're in search of Tarantino's best, you'd be better off renting *Pulp Fiction* or *Reservoir Dogs*—*Jackie Brown* just doesn't compare.

While there are moments of interest and intriguing sequences of events, the mise-en-scene is not such that requires the acoustics and immensity of the theater to be effective. So save your precious, well-earned dollars—and if you're still curious, rent the video in a few months. ★★



Melvin Udall (Jack Nicholson) is shocked by Carol Connelly's (Helen Hunt) public display of affection in the TriStar Pictures Presentation of the Gracie Films Production "As Good As It Gets"

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Titanic proves to be an astounding, spectacular epic

by Kristi McKim
features editor

In James Cameron's blockbuster hit, *Titanic*, the actual history of the "unsinkable" Titanic provides the context for a rather poignant love story. The directing and photography of the film are entirely astounding, as Cameron successfully captures the immense tragedy of this ship that was swallowed by the sea.

Kate Winslet is stunning as Rose DeWitt Bukater, the American debutante who longs for a more "real," more thrilling and happy life than the confinedness and rigid social restraints of the upper class. Her wide-eyed, entirely charming character's strength lies in her curious wonder and sincere appreciation—combined with an absolute grace and fragile beauty.

Winslet's acting conveys quite nicely the internal struggles between loyalty to one's family and one's own independent needs. Her character maintains a quite refreshing depiction of an early twentieth-century woman, as she possesses strength and assertiveness, combined with delicate

beauty and fervent energy.

As Jack Dawson, Leonardo DiCaprio plays yet another charming, lovestruck young man, not unlike his character Romeo in last year's megahit *Romeo and Juliet*. When an actor's particular trademark role is absolutely appropriate and thoroughly effective, though, one should not necessarily be criticized for doing what he/she does best.

Such is the case with DiCaprio's depiction of the energetic, suave, charismatic young artist with an ironic appreciation for the unpredictability of life—and the need to make every moment count. DiCaprio's sleek good looks provide for a convincing portrayal of the spontaneous, wild, Romantic hero Jack Dawson.

Beyond the quality acting, the film is wonderfully directed and filmed (maybe an Oscar nod for Best cinematography and/or directing?). Camera movement served to enhance the "motion" of the film—the scenes (especially the scenes on the upper deck) were shot in such a way as to capture the rolling fluidity of the sea. And shots of the horizon, sunset and starry night sky—and the ship and charac-

ters amidst these settings—are entirely breathtaking.

The full shots of dinner parties and dancing also are artfully constructed and filmed. The lavish sets, costumes and special effects are testament to the extensive cost (over \$200 million) of the film. Differences among social classes are nicely shown through the cross-cutting between scenes of wealth and poverty—in which characters, sets, and costuming contribute to the film's contrasting of classes.

Just as this seemingly unsinkable ship had its obvious flaws, so too does this costly, carefully-produced film have its weaknesses, the main one of which is the poorly written script. While there are some moments of particularly good writing, these few instances serve only to illuminate even more the rather obvious, annoyingly melodramatic utterances of the characters.

Scenes which undoubtedly are intended to be the crux of the film's emotional impact seem rather shallow and nearly parodical in the use of clichés and blatantly obvious observations (i.e. DiCaprio's characters pronouncement, upon learning that the

ship is sinking: "This is not good.").

Titanic's weaknesses pale in comparison to the consistent pace of action, depth of character relationships, and overall quality of the film. Though this movie about a gigantic ship also encompasses an appropriately huge time span (over three hours), the plot and action are interesting enough to keep the audience awake, involved, and genuinely concerned with the characters' fate.

On the whole, this film is definitely one to see in the theater. Since the film's strengths lie in its sweeping shots of the oceanic landscape; and the photography is most effective in showing the sentimental, heart-wrenching tragedy, if you want to see this film, see it now, before it hits the video stores.

The intensity and vastness of the sea, combined with the echoing and resonating sound effects and gorgeous score, will be best appreciated in the movie theater. On the small screen, the sometimes-annoying, poorly-written dialogue will seem all the more grating—and ultimately will detract from your appreciation of this absolutely gorgeous film. ★★ ★ 1/2

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Roundtable Discussion with Charles Johnson - Multi-Cultural Resource Center (First Floor Reed Union Building)

7:30 p.m.

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