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Rock of Ages Film Review

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Rock of Ages – Film Review

By Sarah Werth

In the movie *Rock of Ages*, directed by Adam Shankman, the main theme portrayed is the trouble fame brings to those with it and around it. The story recycles the idea of a sweet Midwest girl pursuing a music career in LA, finding a love interest, breaking up over a misunderstanding, and eventually (spoiler alert) getting back together. The idea is almost as old as the movies themselves and lends to a repetitive but working storyline. The main cast of the movie includes rocker and total mess of a human Stacee Jaxx (portrayed by Tom Cruise); naive, midwestern choir girl Sherrie Christian (Julianne Hough); bar-back turned rocker and love interest Drew Boley (Diego Boneta); persecutor with a deep secret Patricia Whitmore (Catherine Zeta-Jones); and smarmy manager Paul Gill (Paul Giamatti). Together they perform classic 80s rocker songs from artists such as Poison, Styx, Twisted Sister, Foreigner, Bon Jovi, and many others. The great thing about this film's performances is that unlike some other movies with music, it isn't just shoehorned in the scene. It helps to move the story along and helps the audience understand the emotions being portrayed by the cast of characters.

Additionally, many ethical conflicts arise in the film. These include turning to an unsavory profession in time of need, selling out the dreams of others for a profit, and turning a personal agenda into a movement against the whole music scene. The first of these issues arise after main character Sherrie quits her job at the Bourbon Room (the main setting for most of the movie) and takes up stripping to pay her way out of the city and earn a living in her time of need. She ends up having to "entertain" Stacee Jaxx, who is the whole reason for her current

predicament (not that she knows this). It turns her around and helps her realize that she doesn't enjoy her work and misses the life she was leading before at the Bourbon Room. When Sherrie comes out of a back room looking ruffled and followed closely by Stacee Jaxx (who had actually spilled beer all over her hence helping her clean up), Drew, who was her boyfriend, takes his aggression to the stage, impressing Paul Gill (Stacee's manager) who tells him if he loses his "dead weight" (Sherrie) he has a real chance at fame. Paul then takes Drew away from the financially unstable Bourbon Room along with the majority of the money earned by Stacee that was supposed to help save the Bourbon Room from bankruptcy. He turns the rocker into a boy band singer and ruins the lives of not only Drew (who he has sold out to the hip hop scene), but also Stacee Jaxx (who he dumped as a client), Sherrie (who he convinced Drew to dump and therefore caused her to quit her job and turn to stripping when she had nothing else), and the owner of the bar who was depending on the money raised to help his establishment stay afloat. The final plight I will cover is that of Patricia Whitmore. She was once a hard core groupy of Stacee Jaxx. When she was deemed irrelevant by the rocker, she decided to take her anger out on the genre all together. She met and married a politician who became mayor so as to further her agenda. She took her power to the churches, convincing them that rock music was satanic and harmful to the youth of the city. They start to protest the Bourbon Room (or the Head of the Snakes, as she calls it) when it is announced Stacee Jaxx will be playing his final gig there before going solo. She ends up breaking her persona of hard anti-rock preacher when Jaxx outs her and at the end of the movie we see her in a tight rock outfit (different from the wholesome long dresses she had worn up to this point) and sitting at Jaxx's concert.

The lessons seen in the movie are still universally applicable in today's music industry. Many forms of music still receive heavy opposition and accusations; there are still people who will take advantage of others' dreams to make money with no regard to anyone else, and LA is still a very expensive place to live. If you are pursuing a music career there, you will need to get a job (that you may end up despising) to pay bills while waiting for a shot that may never come. The biggest take away for professionals seeing this film should be that talent can be found anywhere, but not always where you look for it. It can also cause major problems for not only the performer but everyone they love or who exists around them if not careful.

I truly recommend this movie to anyone interested in rock music, as well as anyone interested in what life in the 80s was like in LA. The movie's costumes and hair styles allow the watcher to be transported back in time and the score allows for them to feel as though they really belong in the time of portrayal. It is an interesting take on the issues and could easily evoke questions of many ethical and moral problems during the film's setting, such as the difficult task of pursuing a music career in LA during the 80s, and the religious opposition of rock music that was prevalent in the 80s.