

The Little Things Review

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It is in fact the little things that add up to make a good movie, and this ones missing several

The Little Things is what happens when good ideas are executed by people who don't have a vision, and are stuck in the past. Directorial vision is an important part of non-blockbuster movies; it is often responsible for the unconscious feeling of connectedness or disconnectedness you feel while watching a film. So when a movie has a steadfast director, with a strong vision, good understating of the script and the actors they're working with, plenty of time, budget, and just an ounce of luck you can in fact end up with a masterpiece. Unfortunately what you often end up with in place of this is a director who is just working; doing a job and fulfilling their role until the movie is done. I would be remiss to say there's something wrong with this, I can think if plenty of movies that don't give me that strong sense of directorial style and vision that are more than good; but for a movie to be truly great in my opinion something of the director has to come through as you watch it.

I've got nothing against some of John Lee Hancock's other works, though he's never delivered anything that I would consider spectacular. What makes this all the more frustrating is that he has apparently been trying to make this movie for the last 30 years, having penned the screenplay much earlier in his career. This would lead me to believe that he was and probably still is passionate about this project. Unfortunately this movie has nothing stylish or original to speak of. It reminds me most of a bad Raymond Chandler short that is neither brimming with 90's style and nostalgia nor presenting an interesting narrative full of interesting characters. Instead it's a lot of basic stock characters working around this serial killer mystery that only the super cop with a dark past can solve. I appreciate that this movie isn't set in Hollywood 80's, the glorified versions of the 80's that everyone is currently getting sick of as the most overused setting for a story, but the movie doesn't do anything to draw attention to the fact that it takes place 30 years ago.

What it does do is feel like a movie that's 30 years old; the dialogue throughout is stilted, awkward, and only memorable when Denzel Washington is talking about Jared Leto's erection in perhaps the most bafflingly shot police interrogation i've ever seen. It's hard to describe just how hard I laughed at a scene that was trying so desperately to be serious. Though all three of the lead actors give solid performances I can't shake the feeling that someone told Rami Malek not to express emotion, and that Jared Leto had a hard time working through this makeup after his role as the Joker left him a weird husk of a cooky creative type. Denzel Washington's performance is the most memorable of the three but it's marred by the fact that his character is

working through so much guilt over his past that he always comes across as a determined TV hero cop who notices every 'little thing' and not a person with a complex history full of many difficult years as a cop in L.A. in the 70's and 80's. The skeleton of an interesting character is obviously there, and it's hard to hate a Denzel Washington performance, but I think it could be more effectively applied to a different kind of murder mystery script.

The most damning thing about the movie remains how dated it feels; a new camera and some efforts to make the movie feel like a bit of a period piece don't do enough to make me forget how much movies have improved in 30 years. That's not to say that movies from 30 or even 60 years ago don't stack up, but rather the median bar of quality is higher as more generations of filmmakers come up and learn from those before them. In the 90's this would have been one of the darkest and most shocking crime thrillers of whatever year, but today the most I can remember from it is a dick joke that's supposed to be a dick accusation.