

Lee's 'X' hits the mark

by Hollywood Rob

If Spike Lee doesn't get at least an Oscar nomination for this one, he probably never will.

Not that this is pure Lee by any means. Gone is the angle of storytelling that has become so familiar since *She's Gotta Have It* because this isn't Spike's story; it's Malcom's.

While most bio-pics come heavy-handed and unbalanced, Lee's direction of *Malcolm X* remains understated allowing the story to flow evenly while capturing its incredible scope.

Clocking in at just under three and a half hours this is the only telling of the X story in non-documentary form since his assassination in 1964.

The road to make this film was a long, hard one. (Such a struggle usually points to an inferior end product.)

Fortunately, that is far from the case here as the filmmakers turn in a brilliantly understated, well-constructed movie based on *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.

The controversial credit sequence featuring an American flag burning down to the shape of an X and the Rodney King footage, appears as promised and probably would be shocking had it not been such a battle a few months ago, but at least it made the cut.

The first hour of the film deals with Malcom's early years, flip-flopping from his early 20s to flashbacks of his younger years. It remains easy to follow despite its jumbled organization and provides a valuable contrast between the young man he was—dope fiend and hustler—to the great leader he became.

Spike Lee appears as his friend Shorty, with whom



Oscar-winner Denzel Washington plays the title role in Spike Lee's epic film 'Malcolm X.'



Malcolm X

Starring Denzel Washington and Spike Lee.
Directed by Spike Lee.

he is sentenced to 10 years in prison for burglary. Lee turns in a brief, but important performance and will pop up later years after Malcom's transformation.

It is in prison that Malcom is introduced to the prophet Elijah Muhammad (portrayed by Al Freeman Jr.) through a follower with whom he is incarcerated. After prison he becomes a

minister for the church and one of its most outspoken leaders grabbing attention from the press for his controversial views as the movement grows to mass proportions.

Denzel Washington turns in a remarkable performance as Malcolm. Washington looks very much like Malcolm, while not trying to emulate the

man himself. He speaks naturally, like a real person, which makes his character dimensional throughout the film.

Ernest Dickerson does his best camera work yet after his unremarkable performance as director of *Juice*.

This is the first of three bio-pics to be released this season and ultimately the most important due to the prominence of Malcolm X in American history. This brilliant film is three hours well spent. It will re-define the genre.



"I want to bite your neck." Mina (Winona Ryder) is seduced by Dracula's (Gary Oldman) eternal charms in *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, a Columbia Pictures Release.

'Bram Stoker's Dracula' kinda sucks...but not too much

by Hollywood Rob

Bram Stoker's Dracula is a classic example of a guy who was given too much money to make one movie. It is a spectacle of overstatement as if Coppola asked for more-anything, he got twice as much as he needed.

If this movie were the sum of all its parts, it would be terrific, but it has so many parts that they're all trying to crowd each other out. Like Spielberg with *Hook*, somebody needed to step in and rein in this madness, but they didn't.

The main flaw is this film is visually a stunner with awesome special effects and incredible art direction, but suffers from the disease that strikes Tim Burton when he makes a *Batman* movie. That being the story basically gets lost in the dust in favor of atmosphere.

The film has only two superior performances from Gary Oldman as Dracula and Anthony Hopkins as

Dr. Von Helsing the vampire's nemesis. Hopkins manages to make an impression considering how late in the film he is introduced and how infrequently he appears. This is really Oldman's film as Ted...er Keanu Reeves is way out of his league sporting an English accent comparable to that of Kevin Costner in *Robin Hood*. As Dracula's love interest Mina, Winona Ryder seems pretty uninterested in being here at all.

On Coppola's side is his deft inclusion of religious imagery. It works as well here as in the *Godfather* films. Also on his side is a massive marketing campaign and a huge first weekend tally. This movie will be a success no matter what, but only financially.

The story is too mud-

dled to promote this to classic status which is what I believe he was shooting for. It's too bad concentration was wasted in other areas, the possibility for greatness is visible, but ultimately unrealized.



Bram Stoker's Dracula

Starring Gary Oldman, Winona Ryder, Keanu Reeves and Anthony Hopkins.
Directed by Francis Ford Coppola.

Ratings Scale



The Goods-Creme of the Crop

Solid Flick



Flawed, but worth watching

Doesn't cut the mustard



Monsieur Potté says "oui-oui, the film, she reeks"