



Microfilmmaker Magazine

Film
Critiques



Special Film Critique: *The Ringo Bingo Kid*

Director: Raul Gomez
Expected Rating: PG for some language
Distribution: TNT Media Group
Budget: \$60,000
Genre: Family Drama
Running Time: 60 minutes
Release Dates: December 18, 2007
Website: None
Trailer: [Click Here](#)
Review Date: November 1, 2008
Reviewed By: Monika DeLeeuw-Taylor

Final Score: 6.1

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David's life sucks. He is being picked on by a bully, and is unable to stand up for himself. Because of this, his friends don't want to hang out with him, and the girl he has a crush on won't have anything to do with him. David has dreams of being a business mogul someday, like his idol Donald Trump, but these dreams seem entirely too far out of reach, until one day when his luck suddenly changes.

Content



*David's
life sucks...*



*...He is being
chased by a bully...*

Warning – Spoilers ahead!

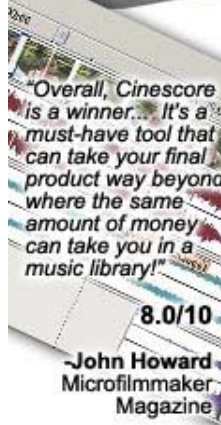
This film has a great opening sequence, which consists of David being chased by the bully. There's even a shot of the two of them running across some train tracks, after which a train goes by (which I'm guessing was faked to avoid serious injury on the part of the actors, but it's still a really nice shot.) This type of chase sequence does a great job at grabbing an audience right away, but the rest of the film just doesn't deliver. Sadly, it takes a fast-paced beginning and just keeps slowing it down, seemingly dragging out the ending to reach the 60-minute mark. There is one other great scene where David finally stands up for himself and sucker-punches the bully, which leads his friends to back him up, but sadly there are few other scenes like this.

One difficulty I had was figuring out who the characters were. There are a number of kids David's age, a couple of girls, David's grandmother, and a couple of older teenagers. But as not all their names are given, it's hard to

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figure out the plot, even harder when the boys are shown as grown-ups twenty-some years later; not to mention all the new characters that are introduced at that point, much to the confusion of the audience. A film with a large cast of characters, especially with many who play important roles, faces the difficult challenge of clearly identifying all the players in an audience member's mind. The original Ocean's Eleven did it by using The Rat Pack. Steven Soderburg's versions used all A-list actors. Unfortunately, neither of these is a viable option for the microfilmmaker, as the former option would involve grave-robbing and necromancy, and the latter a budget the size of Michael Moore's ego.

A more manageable solution can be found by watching an early scene in Guy Ritchie's film *Snatch*. This movie's convoluted storylines and large cast of characters necessitated their introductions early on, which led to Ritchie's creative solution. (Say what you want about Madonna, but her former other half is a very creative filmmaker!) One doesn't have to have a major special effects budget either. I once saw a very low-budget imitation of that introduction, which involved a series of college students running around campus and tossing each other a videocassette tape. Each time one of them caught it, the image would freeze-frame, along with their names. This type of introduction could easily be put together, especially with a cast of kids who seemed so gung-ho, and the Steadicam operator that the production employed.

Toward the end of the film, there is a transition from an image of all the kids together, which becomes a photograph on the wall of a conference room. Inside this conference room stand the kids – now all grown men – who are getting together, some for the first time in years. The transition is a creative one, and is also very well-done. However, the scene which follows just seems to continue the film's slowing pace, and seems even worse at trying to stretch the film out. It is clear that the film is trying to explain to the audience what has happened to these men by use of dialogue, but the lines just sound stilted and forced. For example, when they were children, David happens to mention to his best friend that his little sister has a crush on him – a fact that seems repulsive to the young man. As adults, the two are having a casual conversation, into which David says, "Well, you did marry my sister Ashley," a line which sounds not only fake, but very out of place in a conversation between two close friends.

This scene could be much better if done by narration. Granted, it would shorten the film, but with as many extraneous scenes and moments of little happening, I personally think this film would be much better if it were much shorter. Ending the film with a montage and narration – either by David perhaps, or even Carlito, the goofball of the bunch – could make stilted dialogue humorous. For instance, in the bit of dialogue mentioned above, the narrator could say something to the effect of, "Oh, him? He got over Ashley's case of cooties. In fact, he married her!"



His friends won't play with him...



...And the only person who does seem to care is his grandmother.

Visual Look

There weren't a lot of major visual issues that I noticed – a few of the exteriors had a bit of washout and/or the halo effect, and on a couple of occasions the contrast seemed a bit low. The nighttime images had several out-of-focus shots; something that is always difficult to control when shooting

in low light. I cannot stress the importance of using a monitor, especially when shooting in low-light conditions!

Some of the cuts were a bit confusing at first – toward the beginning there are shots of David sitting alone on the front steps of his house, interspersed with random cuts to several of his friends in a nearby yard. It is a little disorienting for the viewer, and is hard to tell where the boys are coming from when they finally pass by David's house. Of course one can't be expected to get a complete tour of the neighborhood, but it'd be great to make use of the film's Steadicam operator and perhaps follow the boys out of their yard and toward David's house, just for an interesting shot.

One thing that really needs to be fixed, though, is the part in which David's grandmother takes him to Bingo. There's a shot of them in the house, getting ready to leave. Then they walk out the door, there's a cut, and they walk back into the house, with the grandmother proclaiming that David had won the jackpot. There has to be some sort of shot of them in the Bingo parlor! The set doesn't have to be elaborate – most Bingo games are set up in church basements anyway – and the scene can be done by use of montage and goofy music to make it more humorous. In addition, the audience doesn't know how much money David has won until nearly five minutes later when one of his friends mentions the amount – also something the audience ought to be told, as young David he frequently talks about using the money to finance his dreams.

Use of Audio

There weren't a lot of audio issues in this film. The dialogue was clear and easy to understand, although I did notice the background sound dropping out suddenly in a couple of instances. "Room tone" sound should have been inserted into these bits to even out the background audio. In addition, there was one scene where an odd musical sound can be heard in the background, after which David leaves the frame and returns a moment later licking an ice cream cone. That was really the only cue that indicated the sound was caused by an ice cream truck, of which there should have been some sort of visual image, which ended up making the scene look a little sloppy.

There was a nice soundtrack to the film – it helped to add tension to the chase scene, and also increased David's sense of loneliness, particularly in a scene where he runs away from home and wanders the streets at night.



But a surprise windfall at Bingo ...



...Gives him a chance to make his dreams come true.

Use of Budget

I'm actually quite surprised at this film's budget, as it seems awfully high. I don't know exactly where the money went, although the director did mention that they hired a Steadicam operator, which I'm sure was not cheap. However, I didn't even know there was a Steadicam involved in production, as there aren't a whole lot of unique shots. To spend that much money and not have it show in the production is a bit of a disappointment. Granted, moving shots are very complicated to set up, which can be compounded by working with child actors, but there should have been at least a few shots that showed off the great things that a Steadicam can do.

Either way, I honestly think that for \$60,000 this film should have both a better

script and structure, not to mention a cameo by The Donald.

Lasting Appeal

The director had many good things to say about his cast of child actors, about their passion and desire to work. This is certainly something to brag about, as one often recalls the old adage about working with children. However, all the passion in the world won't rescue a film that has poor structure to begin with.

The Ringo Bingo Kid has good potential, but its current format makes it hard for an audience to stay interested. At the very least it needs re-editing with some re-looped narration; possibly even condensed. My advice would be to hire a new editor who wasn't involved in the production of the film – preferably one with screenwriting experience – who can take a look at both the script and the raw footage and come up with a better version. It may involve some re-shooting and probably a lot of looped dialogue, but the end result will be much, much better.

Overall Comment

This film has the potential for a great family drama – many kids have dreams that they hope will come true someday, and presenting the possibility that dreams actually do come true through perseverance and hard work is a theme sadly lost on many movies these days. While it does still need some work, there is certainly a lot of possibility for such a story, and it's one that ought to be told.

Breakdown	
Content	5.2
Visual Look	6.9
Use of Audio	8.4
Use of Budget	4.5
Lasting Appeal	5.6
Overall Score	6.1
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The author of half a dozen screen plays, two novels, and a proficient camera-woman in her own right, [Monika DeLeeuw-Taylor](#) is Microfilmmaker's lead writing analyst and one of our top film reviewers. When she's not writing a critique for Microfilmmaker, she's writing screenplays for Viking Productions.

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