

‘One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest’ had huge potential, but was ultimately a swing and a miss



Director- Milos Forman

Stars- Jack Nicholson (Randle McMurphy), Louise Fletcher (Nurse Ratched), Danny Devito (Martini)

Release Date- November 19, 1975



95%



8.7/10

Critique- Alex Newman

Experience- A lot

Critique’s Credibility- ★★★★★

March 24, 2018 -- Yes, I know what it says : five Academy Awards, 95%, 8.7/10...Critiques may have deemed this movie as “electrifying” however, the book set the bar very high, and the movie wasn’t able to reach it.

The book reached parallels with the audience that the movie just simply could not match. The movie went in the wrong direction right away when McMurphy was the main character, not Chief Bromden. The book allowed the reader to gain an insight in the mind of Chief--who is actually mentally ill-- rather than have the trouble-making and obnoxious McMurphy outshine “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest’s” real meaning.

With a lot of wrongs, the movie DID do some minor things right. Their characterization--or choice of cast-- felt very authentic for an audience to watch. The cast was actually forced to live onset in the institution they were filming at which really added to to authenticity of the actors. Danny Devito, better known as Martini in the movie, really delivered when it was “his turn” to add to the cast’s realness. Jack Nicholson, or McMurphy, was the perfect guy for this role; big

personality and witty comebacks allow Nicholson to really deliver a bona fide performance of McMurphy. However, it's very dispiriting to see a few great portrayals done by the stars in this movie become outshined by the writer's misinterpretations of the book. Sadly--in this case--"One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" ultimately ruined any good performance in this movie.

When the director made the decision to make the McMurphy the main character, he was completely throwing away Chief's heroic persona from the book and completely disregarding Chief's background. Chief's inner thoughts and his stream of consciousness are what make the BOOK so powerful. And the *Fog*. The book's biggest piece of symbolism, the fog, wasn't even included in the movie. Are you kidding me? The fog from the book is one of the reasons the book is so great; It's up for interpretation for what the fog means and that's the part that really intrigues the reader. In the book, Chief claims that the fog is produced by Nurse Ratched, which allows the reader to define their own idea for the symbolism behind the fog. With the inner thoughts of Chief and the symbolism with the fog absent, the movie COMPLETELY missed the true theme behind "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest."

The movie was also missing very critical scenes from the book that have some sort of meaning. One that comes to mind right away is Cheswick's suicide. McMurphy was not completely aware of how impressionable he was to all of the acutes; Cheswick was the first person to fall into McMurphy's game in defiance of the overbearing Nurse Ratched. Cheswick is very supportive of McMurphy and he becomes extremely emotional when McMurphy leaves him out to dry in his own stand against Nurse Ratched. The selfishness of McMurphy drove Cheswick to drown himself in the pool. From the movie's perspective, we really only see the positive effects McMurphy has on the patients. With this missing scene, the audience is left without knowing how susceptible the acutes were to McMurphy's antics.

A smaller, yet, frustrating thing is that Chief barely spoke in the movie. In the novel, Chief breaks out of his shell and communicates fully with the people around him. The few muttered words in the movie are almost an insult to Chief's character; it portrays him as weak when in all reality, he's the strongest character in the novel/film.

Another scene done totally wrong--probably the most important--was the ending. In the movie, Chief is shown smashing a big piece of furniture as he runs out of the broken window into the "real world." The audience applauded as they assume Chief is on his way to a happy ending; Chief is out and is on his way to freedom and happiness. In the novel, the ending is well...not so happy-go-lucky. The book ends with a dog chasing a flock of geese into the middle of a road which allows the reader to assume the dog will be struck by a car. The reader is left with uncertainty as to if Chief is able to succeed in everyday life or whether he will capitulate to the

world's harsh society. The movie went for more of a storybook ending, ending with the audience having a sense of closure versus the uncertainty after reading the book.

Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* had all the potential and tools possible to put his words into a motion picture. However the ones writing the movie completely missed on putting his words into action. Their disregard and ignorance took a beautiful book full of symbolism and turned it into something completely different. I think it's time for someone to give this movie a go again; someone needs to take the reigns and depict a movie that displays Kesey's powerful and symbolic words.