

‘The Hate U Give’ is a must-see for young adults

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 19 October 2018 08:43



Rating: «««« out of «««««

Running Time: 132 minutes

By now, we’ve come to expect certain common themes and subject matter in young adult film adaptations. In fact, so many are dystopian science-fiction dramas that many of them fuse together, at least in my mind.

The Hate U Give takes a very different approach, dealing with real, topical and at times, shocking subject matter. It’s also remarkably effective and stands out as a picture that teenagers would be well advised to see.

The story revolves around Starr Carter (Amandla Stenberg), a 16-year-old black girl who travels from her home in a low-class community to a high school in an upper-class, mostly white neighborhood.

The film shows how she presents two different versions of herself, one to those in her area and another when she’s around her classmates. After attending a party and reconnecting with childhood friend Khalil (Algee Smith), he offers to drive her home.

While heading back, they are pulled over by police. Without warning, violence erupts, ending in

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tragedy. Starr must deal with an incredible loss and decide whether or not to testify against the officers before the grand jury. Her actions ultimately have ramifications not only at home, but at school and throughout the entire region.

That’s a lot of weight for a kid to carry and the movie doesn’t shy away from any of the grimmer aspects.

Starr’s father Maverick (Russell Hornsby) an ex-Black Panther, warns her about the racism black people face in America and what her actions could result in. Starr’s police officer uncle Carlos (Common) offers a more conservative perspective. And local gang leader King (Anthony Mackie) expresses his desire for her to keep quiet (which eventually turns to threats), simply because it may put pressure on him.

All of those around offer advice, but much of it is contradictory. And while all of this is occurring, the lead attempts to keep it all separate from her school life. However, she’s forced to listen in on her friend’s perspective on the event, leading to more conflict.

This is incredible drama for a teen film and the movie features strong performances from the entire cast. It all hinges on the lead performance, and Stenberg does an astounding job. She carries the movie with ease, deftly handling humor, grief and anger with every scene.

There are also some great bits with the adults in her life as she attempts to process what to do next.

Events do boil over as protest groups hit the streets and confrontations arise. Again, it’s surprising to see a film deal with such events in an intense yet thoughtful manner. And there are a few funny comments between family members that add a little levity to the otherwise serious tone. A conversation between Starr and her father about *Harry Potter* as a metaphor for gang culture certainly earns a smile.

Admittedly, it isn’t perfect. A couple of characters are simply drawn and there is one overall aspect that throws things off a bit towards the end.

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While there is no closure on Khalil’s passing, Starr gets off much easier when the various factions in her life butt heads and come together on the verge of violence.

Ultimately, personal life is tied up fairly resolutely and quickly, which seems a bit difficult to believe given the very realistic tone after what occurs to friend Khalil. Still, this is a minor complaint and it’s surprising how much of the film works effectively.

In fact, this is all the more impressive given that the movie deals with so much and is spread over a lengthy running time. It’s remarkable how well the screenplay examines and discusses important issues like racism and standing up against oppression, not to mention dealing with the trials of those affected by the heinous acts of those in power.

By the close, it becomes clear that *The Hate U Give* aspires to greater heights than other films of its ilk and generally succeeds at reaching them.

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