

The movie 'Boogie' comes to On-Demand

Written by gallupsun
Thursday, 25 March 2021 16:31

By Glenn Kay

For the Sun

Rating: 2 out of 4 stars

Running Time: 89 minutes

***BOOGIE* will be available from Focus Features at home On-Demand for a 48-hour rental period beginning March 26.**

It's always important to encourage emerging talent on the filmmaking scene. The new film *Boogie* from writer/producer/director Eddie Huang, is a debut feature that at times shows great promise. Unfortunately, the story isn't without some major issues. The concept itself is interesting and there are some strong individual moments, but there are several elements that don't gel together well and end up hurting the picture.

Alfred "Boogie" Chin (Taylor Takahashi) is a young man living in Queens, trying to make his dream of playing pro basketball come true. Of course, his personal life poses several added challenges. For one, his parents don't get along. Boogie's traditional dad (Perry Yung) is obsessed with making his son into a success no matter what the personal cost. The lead's mother (Pamelyn Chee), harbors deep resentment toward her husband's lack of earning power and wants her child to have financial security.

While the family bickers about priorities and placing the teen in a well-regarded university providing a scholarship, Boogie pursues a young woman named Eleanor (Taylor Paige). He also plots to get attention from recruiters by playing against and beating the area's most talented prospect, Monk (Pop Smoke).

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There's a lot of great material here to create some fascinating drama. The family dynamic offers a lot of tension as each parent vies for the attention of different schools and comes up with a different plan to help their son achieve his goal. When others get involved and offer alternative ideas, it's interesting to hear the offers, as well as the various pros and cons that come with them. At a certain point, Boogie begins to feel pressure from his mom to consider one specific offer, but wonders if he shouldn't wait to see if he'll be approached by a school closer to home with a more direct route to the NBA.

This is all engaging, but a great deal of it is mitigated by the difficult characters. Boogie is a very talented player, but comes across as arrogant for the majority of the running time. Frankly, in general he's not a charming or easy person to like. He ignores advice, literally stares people down and makes inappropriate comments (even to the lady he wants to woo).

In many respects, Boogie also acts passively about his future, deferring decisions to his guardians and then expressing anger at their choices.

As a coming-of-age tale, this all could still be something to explore, as the youngster learns from his mistakes and strives to be a better human being. But despite a couple of scenes with Eleanor that soften his attitude, there isn't much of a character arc on display. There is a scene or two suggesting his own grating behavior is partly influenced by his battling parents, but more could have been made of their effect on his personality. The movie does attempt to take the character down a more unusual path during the film's climax, but Boogie doesn't change dramatically and still seems conceited.

And since the protagonist is socially blunt and members of his support system are consistently mean to one another (often resorting to screaming and smacking others to make their point), the film itself ultimately becomes a slog to sit through. While the performers are all fine, the screenplay could have really benefited from a few lighter notes and more humor to alleviate the constant heaviness. Just about the only relief from the bickering comes in the form of the father's observations, in which he passionately expresses his own passions and beliefs. However, there aren't nearly enough of these moments to keep us involved in the proceedings.

There are some absorbing scenes and intriguing details about how parents try to get a prospective athlete into the right school. Unfortunately, as written, the movie's protagonist isn't

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particularly appealing and the deadly serious tone that permeates most of the film weighs it down. *Boogie* certainly shows potential, but feels like a lay-up that doesn't ultimately land in the basket.

