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Son Of Rambow - DVD

Back to the 80s without Stallone

by Neil Queen published on 15 August 2008

Nostalgia is a funny thing. Dwelling on the past is always a quick bliss fix, and a surefire way for film-makers to establish a connection with viewers.

A nifty reminder of the glory of the 80s and the birth of video culture, former ninja pop video director Garth Jennings' *Son Of Rambow* is a smart evocation of the era, and a damn fine tale to boot.

Like the greatest episode of *Grange Hill* that Nick Hornby never wrote, *Rambow* is a wonderful tale of how pop culture helps define our place in the world and provides refuge from life's harsh realities.

This is definitely the case for Will Proudfoot (Milner), a loner at school, thanks in part to his family's involvement in the Brethren, a branch of Christianity that rejects much of the outside world and its ways.

After sharing a detention with school bad lad Lee (Will Poulter), the pair strike up a curious friendship, mainly due to Lee needing a stuntman to help him with a version of *First Blood* he's making for the kids' show *Screen Test*. Never having seen a TV show or film, being shown Stallone's gung-ho epic has an explosive effect on young Will, popping his previously lodged creative cork like a good un.

Like a kind of underage buddy movie, the pair's bond grows as the film develops, Jennings' form as a video director proving vital, with his visual palette and ability to frame shots capturing the wonder and magic of the lads' endeavours.

All this glosses over their increasingly troubled home lives - Will's mum (Jessica Stevenson) keen to keep him from temptation, while Lee copes with living with his brother, having been deserted by his parents.



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The arrival of French exchange students complicates matters, with the too-cool-for-two -schools Didier keen to get involved. With Didier introducing the geeky Will to a seductive world of chic, Will and Lee fall out over artistic differences, leading to a sad end to the project, but a greater realisation about loyalty and kinship.

VERDICT

There are obvious analogies to be drawn with *Be Kind Rewind*, both reinterpret pop culture in a DIY manner for gags, both from directors with a keen eye for compositional visuals. But *Rambow* is by far the more resonant, less self-indulgent of the two, using its geeky subject as a key to kitchen sink human truths.

Wise, gentle, funny and quirky, you can't really go too far wrong with it.

Rating: 12

Starring: Will Poulter, Bill Milner, Jessica Stevenson, Eric Sykes

Directed by: Garth Jennings

Extras: Making of, director and cast commentary, interviews, short film.

At a glance

What is it?

Drama comedy

Good

Most of it really - especially the fact that it relies heavily on two young unknown child actors, and doesn't suffer for it in the slightest

Bad

Maybe a slight mawkishness towards the end, nothing to be too concerned about though

Verdict

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Price £19.99

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10