

Spotlight On *Driving Miss Daisy*

That was adorable, absolutely adorable. It was such a simply sweet piece that warms the cockles of the heart. The intense, raw and un-cut visceral response that I had was: "aww, that was delightful". While some turn their nose up at such an endeavor, I applaud Alfred Uhry for writing and Bruce Beresford for his direction of *Driving Miss Daisy* as it strives to depict something "aww" worthy.

The story is rather straight forward; it starts off in the 1950s with an elderly, somewhat crotchety Miss Daisy (Jessica Tandy) crashing her car as she attempts to pull out of her drive way. Her son Boolie (a mama's boy played by Dan Aykroyd) hires for Daisy a chauffeur, Hoke (Morgan Freeman), after Daisy at first refuses any help. From there, Hoke and Daisy find each other frequently at odds as they slowly form a relationship that spans the rest of both their golden years of life. The movie is a methodical, slice-of-life retrospective of Hoke and Daisy; the arc of the movie follows the arc of their relationship that lasts throughout decades and there is something beautiful about that small, simple idea. Though the "odd couple" dynamic is nothing new, *Driving Miss Daisy* is excellent example of that done right; a movie uncluttered by half-cooked subplots and over-the-top special effects. Instead, the characters are allowed to develop at their own pace; as organically as any real life person would.

The people who do form are quite delightful to watch. First and foremost, Morgan Freeman and Jessica Tandy knock it out of the park. Freeman has such an energetic and earnestly pleasant nature about him that no heart, even Tandy's carefully iced over one, can resist warming up to it. Despite this magic power though, Daisy is not won over easily. In a performance that understandably won her an Oscar, Tandy crafts a little old lady that is anything but frail and wants everyone to know that. No matter where on the emotional roller coaster she was, Tandy never lets go of the bedrock foundation of willpower that is always pushing Daisy forward in her life. Rounding out the leads, Dan Aykroyd is a supporting actor in the best sense of the word. As he comes in to forward the plot and support the story, he establishes a character as rich and deep as the two stars while never distracting from the central relationship; an impressive use of subtlety and implied characterization.

The film, as with all films, was not without faults. The biggest problem I had was the passage of time. This story is set over the course of 25 years, but they never outright explained when what exactly was happening. Instead, they allowed time to take a metaphoric backseat; relying on throwaway lines and imagery to suggest the next time period. This implied movement forward was further aided by the excellently executed age make-up they used to further get across their point. Despite an understanding that time passed, and while I never would have wanted them to start each scene with a "SUMMER, 1967" placard, there was such a

large span of time in some of the jumps that they occasionally pulled me out of the movie for a moment to figure out where the story was chronologically. The other, smaller, thing was the score. Hans Zimmer, of many a famous movie score, created this one all out of synthesizers and sampling, no live instruments were used, which oddly dated soundtrack to the 80s. This being a period piece, I thought it a little off putting at times to hear those classic electronically generated sounds.

I chose this movie keeping in the theme of our spotlight this month on best actress winners at the Oscars, but this movie ended up receiving a total of four awards that night: Best Picture, Best Makeup, Best Adapted Screenplay and, of course, Jessica Tandy won for best actress . It also received five other nominations: Best Actor (Morgan Freeman), Best Supporting Actor (Dan Aykroyd), Best Art Direction, Best Costume Design, and Best Film Editing and after watching the movie, I think *Driving Miss Daisy* deserved each and every one of those nine awards and nominations. The leads were outstandingly deep and rich with their characters, the costumes were great, the aging was flawless, and the movie was overall really great. Not for its grand magnificence, but quiet subtleties. The story is as smooth and kind as a Sunday afternoon cruise in one of those sweet 50s Hudsons.

This movie gently takes Three and half ruined buildings and tucks them each individually to sleep as Morgan Freeman reads them all a bedtime story and they sip on some warm milk.