

V for Vendetta
By Frederick William Springer III / March 18, 2006

There are many movies (and television programs too for that matter) whose concept sounds intriguing enough to offer promise. *That sounds like a really great premise, can't wait to see it!* However, more often than not, from there the piece usually falls flat on its face and "V for Vendetta" is no exception.

V is for Vision of the future, and not a good one at that. Over time, freedoms have been taken away from the people of England in order to ensure their own safety, so says the dictator. V is for the Vulpine revolutionary who believes that government should fear the people, not the other way around. And V is for Voice, the one our hero gives to the Victimized Masses.

While the actors deliver believable performances, the characters fail to stir any emotion in the Viewer, sympathy or otherwise, and so you watch the screen not really caring what happens to them one way or the other. The imposing dictator (John Hurt) is always angry, Vehemently spewing forth orders, but he isn't particularly scary. Nor are his henchmen. The society they have created is, if you think about it, but the movie doesn't allow you to do that. It doesn't dwell on what has been lost but focuses more on the upcoming revolt with bland apprehension.

V is for Vague references to curfews and food rationing. Human guinea pigs and elimination of homosexuals are injustices also briefly touched upon, but not with the dramatic affect needed to carry our hero's mission. (I don't think that there is any room for debate that the dictator is the real terrorist and not the revolutionary, so I don't see how promoters are trying to spin this as a controversial film.)

Our masked hero (Hugo Weaving) is elegantly charming and appears knowledgeable. He understands the movement he sets into motion is bigger than himself and that as a symbol (aptly revolutionist Guy Fawkes), rather than a person, the message he brings forth is more effective. (In this regard, it seems here that a page was borrowed from another comic book based movie,

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"Batman Begins," whereas the whole book should have been copied since that was a more dynamic depiction of a revolutionist rising against a corrupt government). Our hero saves damsel in distress Evey (Natalie Portman), they exchange what is sometimes lively banter, and she eventually comes around to his way of thinking.

Special effects are kept to a minimum and most of them are realistic, nothing overtly screaming CGI, except for one battle scene where homage is unwarrantedly paid to the writers (the Wachowski Brothers) with blades moving in slow motion, a la "The Matrix," but blood from the wounds still spurting at real time. We get that our hero is quick without seeing the swoosh of his knives in the air and the effect feels contrived and campy since its only appearance late in the film lasts merely a minute.

The music suited the film well though, keeping with the mood. And there is always something about Violence set to classical music that makes me snicker, like civility and unrest are two sides of the same coin bound to come together at some point.

But I am Vexed by two implausible happenings in the confine of the plot: (1) Our hero's powerfully superhuman call to his cause when he is anything but superhuman and (2) our damsel's impeccable hygiene while she is a tortured prisoner. Something tells me that when the clothes given to you are barely enough to cover your body and the food is literally not even fit for a rat to eat, that the nice captors aren't going to give you a razor to shave your armpits and legs (not that that would even be on the mind of someone so terrified and wallowing in self-pity that they remain in the fetal position when not being interrogated).

Someone should also talk to the marketing department at Warner Brothers. With so much hinging on the Gunpowder Treason of 1605, you would think that the head honchos would

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"Remember, remember, the fifth of November," and release the film on the weekend of, especially in the U.K. where the constant reference would have the most potency.

In the end, V is for Vacuum as it sucks away 131 minutes of your life that you'll never get back. If you're smart, you'll leave the theatre seats Vacant as this is the kind of movie you wait to come on cable and watch only if the other 100 plus channels are devoid of good programming.

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