

Movie Review:

'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory' a mediocre rendition

by Matt Rutherford
Arts & Life Editor

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

Directed by Tim Burton
(Warner Brothers, 2005)

★★★

When Tim Burton announced he would be directing his own rendition of Roald Dahl's acclaimed children's book *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, many fans of the original Willy Wonka film (1971) that starred Gene Wilder, were upset at having their movie "ruined" or "remade".

Actually, the movie was not a remake at all. Of course, similarities ran throughout the film (musical rants, the candy garden, even the boat ride), but Burton's film drew nearly its entire story from the legendary book. Even the Umpa-Lumpa songs came directly from the pages of the dark children's story.

While Johnny Depp seemingly ap-

pears to be Burton's godsend for nearly every one of his films as of late, including the upcoming *Corpse Bride*, his performance in this film was particularly disturbing.

Perhaps it was due to his artificial youthful exuberance, or maybe it was just his uncanny resemblance to the present state of Michael Jackson, whichever the case, this was by far not his best performance.

The movie's effects on the other hand, while mostly (and sometimes obviously) blue screen, were fantastic. There was the outside world, where Charlie and his impoverished family lived in yet another one of Burton's crooked houses surrounded by a vast sea of gray, snow covered streets. And then there was the factory. There, the colors were rampant and wild with candy cane walls, mint grass, and purple gummy boats.

But one of the biggest disappointments in the overall effects, however, was the Umpa-Lumpas! It just seemed so bor-

ing to see the same man redone digitally, in both male and female versions to produce these creatures. But once again Danny Elfman (*The Simpsons*, *Sleepy Hollow*) came to Burton's rescue with an interesting score. While I enjoyed the randomness of the Umpa-Lumpa songs, I especially liked the fact that each song represented a different era in musical history.

This film is by all means intended for a young audience and is family appropriate. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* will by no means satisfy any of the fans of the older rendition of Dahl's book, no matter how visually stunning and star studded the movie is. I'd give this film 3 stars, without a good recommendation.

The Clarion Review Rating Guide

- ★★★★: Outstanding, well worth your time & \$\$\$
- ★★★: Not top-notch, but still worth a look
- ★★: May do in a pinch
- ★: Don't bother

Album Review:

'Kung Fu Hustle' Soundtrack a mastery of sound

by Matt Rutherford
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Kung Fu Hustle Soundtrack

Various Artists
(Varese Records, 2005)

★★★★

The soundtrack to the year's most unique foreign film, *Kung-Fu Hustle*, also known as *Gong Fu*, is without a doubt an amazing blend of traditional Chinese music combined with a twist of western influence.

Composer Stephen Chow knew exactly what he wanted when he combined his country's musical masters with the national orchestra. Besides, how can you hate a soundtrack that's made especially for a choreographed axe murder dance? In his follow up to 2001's *Shaolin Soccer*, Chow pays homage to the cheesiness of the world of Kung-Fu flicks.

In a nut shell, the story behind *Kung-Fu Hustle* is about a notorious axe gang and the few warriors who live in a

near by village who have to come out of their seclusion in order to protect what they love most. What's great about the soundtrack is that each group has its own theme. For example the axe gang is represented by track number two: "Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained". This tune is an infectious combination of the brassy roaring twenties and casino lounge.

On the other hand you have the villagers, whose theme is a traditional Chinese piece that has been orchestrated without losing its roots. Track numbers three and seventeen are without fail the soundtrack's best two pieces. The villager's theme, which is entitled "Fisherman's Song of the East China Sea", is so sweeping and majestic that before you know it, its over and you're nearly

begging for more.

Raymond Wong tends to fill the gaps between the more spectacular pieces. He has written and performed the tracks that consist of a solo stringed instrument. His plucking is used to depict the sinister brotherly duo in the movie that uses the same instrument as a weapon. "Blade of Q" and "Midnight Assassins" are two of the least memorable tracks, but, like this entire album, they will eventually grow on you and become part of the bigger picture.

This is probably the best foreign soundtrack I've heard since *Amelie*. The emotion behind each piece is so striking and completely overdone that you can't help but be taken by Chow's mastery of sound. I'd give this soundtrack a perfect score.

