

Our Song is an accurate tune for the teenage life

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□ **The plot needs work, but it is worth seeing for its realistic depiction of teenage life.**

I wasn't entirely sure what to expect from the film *Our Song*.

After all, the film has a low profile and is currently being shown only in a few theatres in the area.

From the title and a quick look at a preview, I thought that *Our Song* would be another cliché movie about teenage divas making it big in the world of music.

I was way off about the cliché diva part but right on target with the teenage aspect.

Director/writer John McKay cleverly and impressively captures the story of three teenage girls growing up in Brooklyn, New York.

The girls, Lanisha Brown (Kerry Washington), Joycelyn Clifton (Anna Simpson) and Maria Hernandez (Melissa Martinez) are best friends whose relationships change

gradually over a hot summer as they approach Labor Day.

The girls find a common bond in the Stepper's Marching Band but come to different paths in their lives once they find out that their school is closing.

If there is one thing going for this film, it is its realism.

McKay uses the streets of Brooklyn and the actresses to create a film that feels more like a documentary.

The setting is superb because its simplicity captures the essence of the story.

The girls are supposed to live in a rough area; hence the movie was filmed in a neighborhood far from the clean streets of a residential development.

The reality of the movie is further displayed through the simple scenes such as those where the characters walk down the streets talking or just hanging out.

The actresses in the movie act naturally and completely free.

It was nice to see teenagers who looked like teenagers.

The actresses wear very little make-up and opt for t-shirts and ponytails.

The interaction between the

characters is also very casual. Throughout the movie it feels as if they were saying what they would say on any normal day in any ordinary conversation.

The script is well written and the actresses succeed in carrying it out.

McKay develops the strong characters of Maria, Lanisha and Joycelyn by making them typical teenage girls who experience the drama of teenage life.

Although the girls have their typical fun of shoplifting, flirting, hanging out and partying, each of them experiences new revelations in her life.

Maria has to face an unplanned pregnancy and the challenge of getting into a new school.

Joycelyn has to decide between old friends and a new crowd.

Lanisha is left in the middle trying to keep the world from falling apart.

If there is one thing the movie is missing, it is a plot.

The movie runs only 96 minutes and throughout that duration of time I kept wondering when I was going to get to the story.

Somehow McKay manages

to skip right over a plot when creating this film.

There was definitely no rising action, climax or resolution. Maybe the lack of plot was intentional.

Perhaps McKay's hope was to tell a story that did not have any real climax.

The film moved progressively, showing the affairs of each girl but it never resolved their problems.

In addition to the lack of plot, the film also leaves questions unanswered.

For example, I'm still wondering what happened to Lanisha after her dramatic asthma attack and what the stain on Maria's shirt was. Also, what happened to Joycelyn at the end of the story?

There were also a few moments when scenes seemed out of place.

Many times I found myself asking, "What is the point of that?"

However, one of the best elements of the film was the Stepper's Marching Band even though the viewer sees limited footage of it.

The viewer cannot see everything the band is doing because the cinematographer chose selective shots as

opposed to the entire view.

Our Song dispenses stereotypes about teenage movies while at the same time filling several stereotypes about teenagers.

Thanks to the actresses and the setting, this movie feels natural.

However, look out for the actions of the characters, such as shoplifting, drug use, and profanity, which add to the stereotypes of teenagers and also cause the movie to be rated R.

CLASSIFIEDS

Afterschool babysitter needed for children ages 9 and 12. M-F, 3:30-6 p.m. \$9 per hr. Call Dori O'Toole at 981-0191 (work) or 851-7973 (home).

Tutors needed Monday thru Friday from 2:15-5:00 p.m., working with students in homework and supplemental curriculum materials. The Southwest Wake YMCA's Achiever Program serves youth from low income families who need additional academic support during the school year. The program is a partnership with Apex Elementary School and is located at the Southwest Wake YMCA Program Center, just 10 minutes

from Meredith. Pay varies based on experience. †For more information on how you can help a child grow academically, please call Nick Errato or Tony Campione at the Southwest Wake YMCA, 657-9622

The *Herald* does not check ads before they are placed. When you respond to an ad, do so at your discretion.

CORRECTIONS

The Sept. 12, 2001 article titled, "Bemused with your computer? Take a class," incorrectly reported that computer classes were being offered through the Office of Technology Services. Those classes are actually being offered through the math and computer science department.

These classes fulfill a variety of purposes, focusing on topics such as the competency test, word processing, presentation graphics, spreadsheets, research paper formats, resume instruction, and PowerPoint. There are also classes for those who need help with laptops.

The classes are 60-90 minutes long and take place in various computer labs. By attending these classes, students will gain skills in areas most demanding to them. The classes are free of charge, and students will not receive credit.

Leslie Creek is in charge of creating, scheduling and constructing the classes. She pointed out, "There seems to be a demand from the Pilot program as well for these classes. So we are mainly trying to get the word out."