



Delroy Lindo chats with detectives John Turturro and Harvey Keitel in Spike Lee's latest film, 'Clockers.'

Keitel, Lindo Bring in 'Clockers' in Good Time

Proclaimed by Spike Lee, the film's director, as "the final nail in the coffin of the 'urban drama' (read: 'gangsta' movie)," "Clockers" is a remarkably complex picture about cops, crooks, and the relationship therein.

Once focusing on Richard Price's novel about a 40-year-old police detective going through a mid-life crisis, the story is now centered around Strike (Mekhi Phifer), a 19-year-old African American youth who is a "clocker" (an around-the-clock drug dealer) who realizes that getting paid means taking more risks than he was prepared for.

When the arrest of Strike's brother for murder smells sour, investigators Rocco Klein (Harvey Keitel) and Larry Mazilli (John Turturro) turn to Strike, who is the next likeliest candidate. Soon Strike is caught between pressure from the police and the power of the local drug kingpin, Rodney (Delroy Lindo), who has taken him under his wing.

The plot disappears and reappears

among a sea of diatribes about anything from hardcore rap to the dangers of drug use. In the first hour, the film doesn't even appear to be directed toward any end, but rather appears to be a soapbox about Lee's personal views of the ghetto.

Lee's usually lush photography appears to have been scraped away with sandpaper, leaving Malik Sayeed's stripped-down style, which features shaky pans, zooms, and focus shifts that come off as an extended "NYPD Blue" riff.

The film addresses several problems that it fails to respond to; in particular, the audience never finds out the point of all of the trouble Keitel's character goes to for these two African Americans in whom he shows so little interest during the film.

These glitches still do not prevent the performances from allowing the film to be one of the most powerful of the year. Phifer, previously an unknown, turns in one of the

most genuine portrayals of adolescent torment and indecision of any film seeking to represent this angst-filled age. Phifer juggles the scenes with his friends and with Lindo and Keitel like a pro, still managing to show his susceptibility to the adult world.

Keitel ("The Piano") turns in another riveting performance as Klein. His explosive moments are as powerful and convincing as any since his overpowering (and extremely raw) portrayal of a cop on the fringes of the law in "Bad Lieutenant."

Delroy Lindo may receive a nomination based on the strength of Rodney and

his other two Lee performances, most notably in "Crooklyn." His ability to traverse from likeability to sheer terror in a matter of gestures is frighteningly smooth.

Although the film is a study of motiveless acts, the general apathy with which characters perform their activities contradicts the idea that someone can simply choose to help another without any provocation. Pluses and minuses aside, "Clockers" is a raw, disturbing, and deeply moving film about the interaction of people who have perpetual and mutual contempt for one another.

TODD GILCHRIST
Movie Review
"Clockers"
B+

PlayMakers Presents Shakespeare Classic

It is quite pathetic that if I were to mention the name "Iago" in casual conversation these days, most people would think I was referring to the annoying parrot in "Aladdin." If you happen to be one of those people, then you definitely need to get some serious culture in your life. The best way to obtain some culture is to get over to the Paul Green Theatre, A.S.A.P., to see PlayMaker's presentation of "Othello." Directed by David Hammond, this show is, simply put, drama at its finest.

NICOLE QUENELLE
Theater Review
"Othello"

Set in 19th century Venice, the play centers around the love affair of Othello (the Moor) and Desdemona, which is being torn apart by the jealous rage of Iago. Iago's primary means of destroying Othello is to plant a seed of suspicion in Othello's mind that his friend Cassio is "topping" Desdemona.

Iago is the first of the characters to really draw the audience into the action of the play. Arrestingly played by Conan McCarty, Iago almost makes the audience feel dirty, drawing them into his web of deceit through center stage, spotlighted monologues in which he frighteningly relays his plans of betrayal. What makes Iago such a disturbingly effective villain is his ability to turn the most innocuous of gestures and expressions by Desdemona

and Cassio into actions of lust in the eyes of Othello. McCarty's line delivery and expression are very nonchalant during these manipulations, making Iago's motives seem not deliberate and demonstrating an intimate understanding of his character.

Iago's primary target of vengeance is the title character played by Earl Baker, Jr., whose tragic flaw is his naivete and trust in mankind. Baker carries off the complexities of this multifaceted character with great credibility. Not an easy thing to do when you're playing a character who, during the span of the play, experiences happiness, bliss, incredulousness, annoyance, anger, and at least 10 varying degrees of rage. Suffice it to say, Baker is very adept at making the quick transitions his character requires from one emotion to another (or, as it may be, from one degree of an emotion to a deeper degree of that same emotion) seem very real. In doing so, he is able to evoke a genuine sense of pathos from the audience. This pathos is extended to Desdemona (Celeste Cuilla), Othello's wife and the object of both his bliss and his rage (and every emotion in between). Of all of the characters, Cuilla's is the most refined. Though her character is a 19th century Venetian woman, Cuilla speaks the language of any woman who has gone through the emotional hell of losing the love of her man by forces beyond her control.

I feel compelled to mention here that while the plot of "Othello" centers around

an interracial couple, the play itself is not thematically about race. It is about love, betrayal and revenge to its most horrifying and destructive degree. So if you are expecting "Jungle Fever" in 19th century Venice, you can throw that thought further from your mind than that obnoxious parrot in "Aladdin."

Lighting design by Robert Wierzel and sound design by Mark Hartman complement the acting to create the mood of the play. A piercing spotlight and foreboding music during Iago's monologues entangle the audience in his treachery even further. The use of almost complete whiteness on Desdemona's death bed gives the image of purity and innocence lost in her murder and slander.

Clearly the most profound handicap of this show is its length (which really says a lot about the quality of drama here if you think about it). The play runs approximately two hours and 45 minutes with a 15-minute intermission. In this culture of increasingly shrinking attention spans you may be asking yourself, "Why should I sit through a 3-hour-long play about love and betrayal when I can get an hour full of that for free watching "Melrose Place?" Well, frankly, if you are the type of person who would ask this question, maybe you shouldn't watch "Othello." After all, Shakespeare doesn't appeal to everyone, but if you know it's your dish, PlayMakers' "Othello" is a real treat.

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