

Father Stu - Film Review

I'd like to thank Kova PR, Sony Pictures and Amersham & Chalfont's Together for inviting me to an early press-screening of this film. Although I didn't love the movie, I loved the experience, and it has given me further incentive to continue writing and watching films.

The Tree of Life - one of my favourite films - is a bold, brilliant, beautiful, explorative of consciousness, existentialism and family - very much a Christian film. Even as a non-believer Christianity and Spirituality can be one of the most touching, inspiring subjects to explore in the medium of film. That's not to say Father Stu is inherently a bad film. There are many aspects that I find to be genuinely worthy of praise, but it has faults in crucial, vital places.

Father Stu opens in an explosive fashion - introducing us to a barrage of sucker punches, boxing gloves and screaming rednecks. Blood is shed and bruises are born in the ring where Stuart, our protagonist, fights. Over the course of an eventful couple of weeks where newborn dreams, newfound romances and newly discovered passions are uncovered, Stuart is the victim of a near-fatal motorbike crash where he is plunged into a coma. When he awakens from his deep sleep, his faith and spirituality do so too. Thus begins the true-life chronicle of an angst driven ex-boxer aspiring to become a priest.

The constant supply of musical needle-drops, interesting shots and great acting from Mark Wahlberg and Mel Gibson attacked my senses that I didn't really have time to feel bored.

But, unintentionally, these maximalist creative decisions only prevented the clear themes of



forgiveness, ambition and faith from becoming apparent thanks to the country songs that would play at the end of every scene and the brief two and a half minute conversations that made up the two hour runtime. The angry, hasty aesthetic of the film worked in the first third, when our character was a raging bull on the brink of a mid-life crisis, but didn't work when our character was learning to love, forgive and accept the God he believes in into his heart. There are times when I wish a film would go further - go crazier - but this is not that time. Restraint, subtlety and understanding is what I think Father Stu needs to become truly great.

Father Stu opened in cinemas on May 17th.

◆ Tom Boyd-Hall

Amersham School student by day, film lover at every other waking moment. Tom has ambitions to one day direct film. Until that time arrives, Tom busies himself watching films, editing and writing. Tom is currently honing his skills at GCSE, and endeavouring to make his mark at A level within the next few months.

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