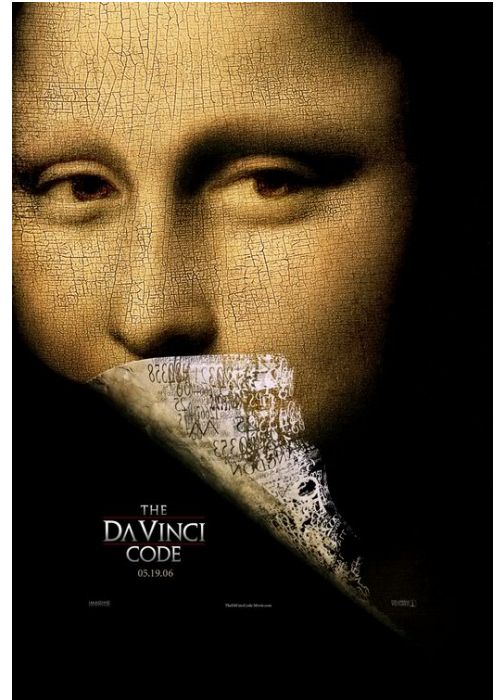


Movie Review: The DaVinci Code

Written by {ga=mitch}

Thursday, May 25 2006 7:00 PM -

When deciding which flick to send the uber-talented Mitch Cyrus out to review, the choice was easy this week. The highly controversial 'The DaVinci Code', which doubles as the years first true blockbuster film. I've never read the book, and know little of the story ... but after reading Mitch's review, it's in the "must-see" category for me. Enjoy.



What happens when you combine a controversial movie based on a controversial book with a star director and a star actor known for making Important Films?

Answer: Everyone gets ticked off...with the exception of the audiences around the world that made it the #1 movie.

The Catholic Church (especially the Opus Dei sect) is upset; other religious groups are upset; many foreign governments are upset...all because they feel the movie denigrates Christianity. Movie critics everywhere are upset because this isn't a "serious enough film".

To which we, the movie going public, say..."get over yourselves".

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“The DaVinci Code” is a FICTIONAL action/adventure/mystery film that is thoroughly enjoyable to watch. It’s not going to win the Oscar for “Best Picture” next year. It’s not going to go into the AFI Top 100 list. It’s not going to change the world; for better or for worse, or provoke any Deep Thoughts for the people that watch it.

That’s OK. It’s a SUMMER BLOCKBUSTER. It’s not supposed to do any of those things, and luckily, it appears that most of the public think the same way, and understand that director Ron Howard is not trying to pass this off as The Truth about the life of Christ...he’s just making a slick, suspenseful movie that will keep you guessing for the entire 2 ½ hours.

Normally, one would not picture Tom Hanks as an action hero. However, he works perfectly in this film as Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon, due to the fact that the character is not supposed to be out swashbuckling from one danger to another. Hank’s Langdon is an intellectual man that is scared, confused, and running for his life. In Paris for a lecture and book signing, he is called to the Louvre at the scene of the murder of a colleague. The old man, as was shown at the start of the film, has been shot by a scary looking Albino (another group ticked off by the movie) in monk’s garb, chillingly played by the talented (and almost unrecognizable) Paul Bettany. Before dying, the victim manages to leave several clues regarding his killer and the secret that led to his killing, many of the clues pointing towards the works of Leonardo DaVinci.

But the police inspector in charge (Jean Reno) has already made up his mind that Langdon is the killer. Before he can spring his trap, Langdon is joined at the scene by a gifted French cryptographer with police credentials, Sophie Neveu (Audrey Tautou), who helps him escape. From that point, they are on the run, trying to stay ahead of both the police and the killers while trying to unravel the mystery.

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It's a mystery that ends up involving far more than just the killing of one man. The old man was not only Langdon's friend, but also Sophie's estranged grandfather, and possibly a prominent member of a secret society known as The Priory of Scion. The Priory has been rumored to be guarding a secret that could possibly destroy either the power of the Catholic Church, or the entire Christian faith...depending upon who you ask. DaVinci was also a reputed Grand Master of the Priory in his day, hence the belief that some of the clues are imbedded into his works. The scenes shift from Paris to the French countryside to London as Langdon and Sophie enlist the aid of Sir Teaburg (Ian McKellen), a former Langdon mentor, in their search.

For the most part, the movie plays like a Thinking Man's version of Disney's "National Treasure". Like that pleasant Nicolas Cage piece of fluff, Langdon, Sophie, and Teaburg are not just avoiding the bad guys, but trying to solve an elaborate puzzle. Like most movies of this genre, as they get closer to their goal, the bad guys also get closer, the danger level is higher, and they are unable to know who to trust. But unlike "National Treasure", it never delves into the campiness or absurdity of actions. Nothing rings truly false during the chase scenes, and Howard manages to avoid the common trap of such films; the reliance upon some type of "miracle" to save our heroes (with one minor exceptions...birds flying out of a belfry to distract a gunman just before he pulls the trigger).

I have never read the novel by Dan Brown, and as far as the movie goes, I don't feel I missed anything by not doing so. I have, however, read of all the controversy and find it all to be much ado about nothing. I never felt I was watching a documentary, and to me it's obvious why Howard did not feel the need to add a disclaimer to this film. If you are the type to need a disclaimer to ensure you that this is a work of fiction, then you probably aren't at the movies anyway: You're in the basement on the Internet discussing weird conspiracy theories with other lunatics.

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The beauty about movies is that they can take outlandish ideas and obvious fantasies and turn them into a visual delight that allows you to escape the Real World for a few hours. If you take that attitude, then you will enjoy this film. If you are sure going in that they are trying to make a political point, as was the case in "The Day After Tomorrow", then you probably want to skip this because you'll probably end up seeing whatever it is you're convinced you'll see going into the film. This would be your loss, as this is the most enjoyable film I've seen this year since "Inside Man".

My Rating: Frank Ryan (3 Footballs).

Review Key:

Otto Graham: Over 4 Footballs. HOF quality movie

Bernie Kosar: 4 Footballs. Excellent

Brian Sipe: 3 ½ Footballs. Very Good

Frank Ryan: 3 Footballs. Good

Bill Nelsen: 2 ½ Footballs. OK. Well worth seeing.

Kelly Holcomb: 2 Footballs. Disappointingly inconsistent but some bright spots.

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Tim Couch: 1 ½ Footballs. Poor. Had potential, but lack of support led to an overall stinker.

Jeff Garcia: 1 Football. Horrible. All hype; no performance.

Mike Phipps: ½ Football. “We gave away Paul Warfield for THIS?” level of suck

Spergon Wynn: No Footballs. UberSuckitude personified.