

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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101C

Prince, 'Purple Rain' sing familiar refrain

the movies
Dan Greenberg



Rock star Prince stars in "Purple Rain" as The Kid, a mixed-up musician whose personal problems are both a hindrance and an inspiration to his career. Apollonia Kotero co-stars.

"Purple Rain" fits the age-old pattern of Hollywood show-biz musicals. The plot and acting are minimal and the song and dance is what it's all about. If you like the musical style of hand, you'll like the movie. If you don't, you won't. I'm in the latter category.

I don't like rock music (or, as a usually reliable source informs me, "funk" music) so I didn't like "Purple Rain" even though it is well-done.

As with most Hollywood musicals, the plot, characters and acting are very limited. At any time there is the threat of character development or plot complications, they break into song and dance.

That's the accepted convention and the show must go on, with one contemporary addition. In addition to song and dance used to avoid the story line, occasionally the principals take off their clothes to avoid serious dramatic development.

In the case of the heroine, Apollonia (Apollonia Kotero), that's not all bad since neither her singing nor acting hold nearly as much promise as her physical attributes.

AS IS THE USUAL case, the heroine

comes to the big city to "make it big in show biz," which these days is rock music. "I want to have a career."

Apollonia falls in love with another rising star, The Kid (Prince), who has numerous psychological problems because his father (Clarence Williams) beats his mother (Olga Karlatos) when they're not drinking, and loving. Naturally, problems result from the father's failed musical career and whether or not he and his wife have had enough faith in one another.

There's a lot of murky, dimensore Freud about their mixed marriage (he's black and she's Italian) to complete The Kid's troubled home life.

Predictably, The Kid starts slapping Apollonia, because Hollywood learned from Freud: "Like father, like son." And so the story goes.

Fortunately, there's not much story and the nearly two-hour movie is filled with one well-filmed rock number after another. It's rather like watching MTV with the numbers linked by common performers and a continuous story line in one locale.

THE PRODUCTION is well designed and presents visual treats for those who enjoy the rock scene. Costumers Marie-France Lewis & Vaughn, plus production designer Ward Preston ("Airplane" and "That Championship Season") and set decorator, Emmy winner Ame McCauley ("Eleanor and Franklin," "Star 80," "Nine to Five" and "Modern Problems") deserve credit.

Great care obviously was taken to costume and make-up rock concert audiences in a variety of rock, punk, funk and reggae get-ups that are interesting and visually attractive, even to these more traditional eyes.

Much to the film's credit, the production staff successfully met the challenge of cutting a film to rock music. Lighting designer Roy Bennett, who tours with Prince, and cinematographer Don Thoria worked closely with co-editor Ken Robinson and writer-editor-director Albert Magnoli.

Properly, in this case, they disregarded conventional continuity of time and place in favor of the pace and rhythm of the rock music played.

Rock music is loud and unconventional and very close to its devotees. So, in "Purple Rain," the visuals are close-up and the images are intensely patterned.

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