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History 12

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Let’s Talk Movies (5/10 stars)

 The movie “Rasputin: Dark Servant of Destiny” directed by Peter Bruce is about a man, also named in the title Grigori Rasputin (Alan Rickman). It shows his life when he travels to St. Petersburg, where he meets a priest that leads him to the royal family. He then proceeds to treat their hemophilic son, Prince Alexei (Freddie Findlay) and gains more of the Romanov’s trust. Furthermore he gets targeted, poisoned and then killed.

The movie was accurate in the big picture, but in smaller details it was not. In the big picture they had it so a member of the church recommended Rasputin to the royal family and with his lure of healing powers, the Romanovs requested Rasputin’s help. It also showed the trust that was slowly built between the Romanovs and Rasputin. There was an allusion towards rumours about Rasputin and Czarina Alexandra (Greta Scacchi) about their supposed sexual affairs. The movie did a good job in not acting on the rumours, it showed the both of them with a platonic relationship, he helps her son, she lets him do so. Plus she was a prudish Victorian woman dedicated to her husband, so the relationship wouldn’t have made sense, especially since the Czar and Czarina married out of love. Some other examples of how the movie was accurate are how Rasputin died but also the prophecies he told both the Czar Nicholas II (Ian McKellen) and the Czarina Alexandra.

Now onto the things the movie got wrong. Starting with the scene where Rasputin is off in Moscow and Alexandra calls Rasputin to heal her son. The son in real life got injured during a carriage ride, there was a bump in the road that jarred him and caused internal bleeding in his leg. During the movie the boy was just bleeding out of his ear. There was also no actual proof that Rasputin took the pain onto himself from healing others. This was most likely done for Hollywood effect and to introduce some spiritual realism. Since there needs to be a balance in the world. A few other smaller details happen during his death scene, in real life he was shot three times, including in the temple. The movie however he was only shot twice, not even in the temple. His death was also heavily dramatized and drawn out, he was shot multiple times by Felix Yusupov (James Frain), then thrown into the water but he did not walk out of the house like depicted in the movie. Finally, they did portray the Romanovs family death scene correctly. The family was under house arrest, then brought down into the basement and shot.

The cinematography in the film was quite dull. It was all bright and full lighting, no major shadows over anyone’s faces, only gentle ones. The camera shots were mainly point of view or medium shots, not much variety with them. The costumes were dull, but in a good way. They shouldn’t be over the top flashy like today’s would be, back then they would still be rich looking, but not as vibrant as people might think they should look. So in conclusion it was accurate with the costuming. But other than costuming, there were a few minutes in the film where the sound was oddly off. It lasted for a couple of minutes and completely didn't fitin . During that awkward silent period where there should be sound, it completely takes you out of the movie.

The movie gets 5/10 stars, since it’s accurate in the big details, but not very attention grabbing in the filming. What saves it is some of the acting and the correct historical details. I would not recommend this movie to someone unless they were interested in a visual film of Rasputin’s history with the Romanov family, even then there isn’t a lot of relation shown between them. The movie is mainly filled with empty space and long shots. Overall a dull movie with good acting and some historical accuracy.

Sources

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