

# ***One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* Review: A New Lens... Better or Worse?**

3.5 out of 5 cigarettes.

By Sierra Williams | 9:33 pm, March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018



*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is a classic. Although incomparable to the book, for many reasons I might possibly mention later on, it is a amiable and realistic portrayal of the struggles within mental institutions. The movie, based on the book *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Ken Kesey, illustrates the daily life of several mental patients and their struggle with the covetous for power nurse: Nurse Ratched.

Fitting all of the countless awards its recieved, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is truly a groundbreaking film. Although it contrasts from the book quite a bit, mainly the primary character switch from Chief, played by **Will Sampson**, to McMurphy, it holds many of the same major themes like power and dehumanization. The storyline for both starts in a mental institution with absolute power held by Nurse Ratched, **Louise Fletcher**. After the submission of a new patient, Randle McMurphy, the boat starts to rock. Mcmurphy, played by **Jack Nicholson**, is loud, obnoxious, and NOT afraid of a petite little nurse. While bonding with each of the patients through cards and gambling, Mcmurphy stirs up trouble in the ward, challenging Nurse Ratched's power, as one would expect, this doesn't go very well. The two go back and forth like a game of tug of war, until finally the game ends..... No spoilers here, you'll have to watch and see who wins!

Although the film holds the same themes, it lacks some of the smaller sentimental pieces that the book held; smaller pieces that led to one even bigger piece. McMurphy's christ-like figure. Throughout the book there were small hints that really drove home the idea. Taking them to the ocean for the fishing trip; all TWELVE of them. Referencing a crown of thorns before treatment. Being known as a marauder. The list goes on. McMurphy was a christ figure, but the film didn't capture that as beautifully as all of those Kesey book readers may have hoped, although I am constantly reminded: they must be viewed as separate pieces of work.

The film may not have portrayed the lovely christ-like figure of McMurphy, but it did have outstanding casting. As one might say, it is remarkably hard to fake emotions, especially anger and sadness, but the actors for *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* were absolutely outstanding at portraying the different mental illnesses. They adhered with profound passion in each and every one of the scenes, especially the scene in which McMurphy attacks and strangles Nurse Ratched. That intimate scene was powerful in and on its own, and was unfortunately carried out to McMurphy himself. Each character was unique and fitting for the role showing outstanding acting skills. Although not every character fit my exact vision while reading the book, they each blew away their individual parts.

Another important thing I'd like to bring up is the set design. Although my 2000's brain might be biased, the set up was not as all what I had pictured and was much simpler than I expected. Although the nurse's glass box room and caged patients existed, they didn't really fit the modern lens I had in mind. To strengthen the power theme, I picture the Nurse's glass room to be above the common area overlooking ward, while instead it was on the same level. Another thing I expected was a cleaner, more organized set up, although I liked the idea of the dirty patients and cleaned nurses and ward staff that was portrayed in the film.

Although the film portrayed the mental patients well, it left out a crucial identity factor: the identity of Chief. Although Chief played mute and might've been hard to engage in the film, it left a gaping hole in the film, one that explores many important subjects including, war trauma, race, and family. Stripping these pieces from the script took many enriching and important craft elements that the book portrayed like the mechanic imagery and family and heritage background. Without these pieces the film lost enriching factors and unfortunately I believe it had less to do with Chief's muteness and more to do with his colored skin. Although we are slowly moving in the right direction with the new release of *The Black Panther*, the film industry had countless struggles with placing minority races as powerful or positive lead roles. This is a different argument brought up, but still food for thought. If a new film is created, hopefully Chief's family background and trauma will not be disregarded and the film will capture all the complexities of the book regarding Chief.

*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* breaks film normality and brings to surface the fight for mental patients to this day, even after being produced over twenty years ago. The film challenges mental institutions regulations and emerges the true evil of the stigma around those who are “mental” or “not normal” in a sense. The film also allows the patients to be re-humanized by the camera. The camera grasps an inside look on the patients daily lives and struggles, capturing each of their tempestuous emotions as they transpire. The capturing of these sentimental emotions allows the viewer to attach to the patients and feel their pain on more than an “oh that stinks for you” level. Without the casting, script, and camera angles, the film would not have accomplished all that it did.