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Les Quatre Cents Coups

Les Quatre Cents Coups, or rather *The 400 Blows*, is a French film that was directed by Francois Truffaut in 1959. The movie stars Jean-Pierre Leaud as Antoine Doinel, Claire Maurier as Mme Doinel, Albert Remy as M Doinel, and Guy Decombe as the school teacher. This film had outstanding character development, pulling the viewer into the lives of a poverty stricken family in Paris. Truffaut's film is a model of a true realistic movie, as there appears to be no manipulation from a film crew. I give this movie the four stars (****) that it well deserves and add it to the must-see list.

The film takes place in Paris, France. It is a look into a few weeks of the life of a young boy, Antoine. The film is made of many consecutive events that make up the movie's plot rather than one huge climax or tragedy. This film instead takes us on a journey of a young boy who is misunderstood and time after time ends up in the wrong place at the wrong time. Troubles with authority figures, from parents to schoolteachers, entrap Antoine in a never-ending circle of confinement and escape.

The young boy is seen acting in the same manners as his schoolmates. He is no different from any other boy at that age, but it is he alone who is singled out as a delinquent child. The young boy draws the audience into forming a bond with him. We feel sympathy for Antoine as he is clearly good at heart but has no positive role model in his life. His mother and step father with whom he lives with, are too preoccupied with their own pleasures and lack the patience to deal with Antoine, or any other thirteen year old for that matter. We see Antoine's youth and innocence as he is seen stealing a bottle

of milk when he is on his own and hungry. Once more when he is locked up in a jail cell with several prostitutes, the viewer's heart reaches out for the young boy who does not belong there.

The family functioning was portrayed in such a realistic way that audience members are able to relate. The family definitely had its own dysfunctional aspects with the lack of attention the parents showed towards their child, the secret affairs, the birth out of wedlock, the money issues, etc. However, it was not all bad all the time. There were good times mixed in there as we see the step father and his son engage in jovial conversations, or the family theater outings. In looking at Antoine's home life, the viewer is able to see that the young boy is not the only one trapped and feeling confined. Each character means well but is too concerned with their own matters to give Antoine the attention that he needs.

The last frame in the movie sums up the entire theme of the movie with just one frame. The director uses a freeze frame shot of Antoine once he has ran away from the center for juvenile delinquents and has reached the ocean. Here Antoine has again escaped from confinement, but for how long? The viewer is left not knowing whether to feel sorry for the young boy who is all alone in the huge world, or to feel relieved that he is on his own and free.

This film did an amazing job of portraying a true realistic style of filming. From the black and white (color) (it could have easily been retouched with color since 1959) to the lighting and character development, we forget that a script even exists. The viewer is tricked into thinking that they are watching a glimpse of reality for this young boy. This

movie rates high in my book as it leaves you thinking long after the movie is over of what will become of young Antoine.

Good!
Insightful.
well-written.
✓++