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FILM REVIEW: KING RICHARD Serves Up An Ace @AFIFEST

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

King Richard, the Will Smith-led, Warner Bros. biopic, served as the 2021 AFI FEST Closing Night Film at the historic Hollywood Chinese Theatre with a Red Carpet Premiere.



Serena, left and Venus Williams, King Richard Red Carpet Premiere Screening, AFI FEST, TCL Chinese Theatre, Los Angeles, California, USA â?? 14 Nov 2021 â?? Photo Credit: John Salangsang/AFI/Shutterstock



Demi Singleton, Serena Williams, Venus Williams and Saniyya Sidney, King Richard Red Carpet Premiere Screening, AFI FEST, TCL Chinese Theatre, Los Angeles, California, USA â?? 14 Nov 2021 â?? Photo Credit: John Salangsang/AFI/Shutterstock



Aunjanue Ellis, King Richard Red Carpet Premiere Screening, AFI FEST, TCL Chinese Theatre, Los Angeles, California, USA â?? 14 Nov 2021 â?? Photo Credit: John Salangsang/AFI/Shutterstock



Will Smith, left, and Jada Pinkett Smith,, King Richard Red Carpet Premiere Screening, AFI FEST, TCL Chinese Theatre, Los Angeles, California, USA â?? 14 Nov 2021 â?? Photo Credit: John Salangsang/AFI/Shutterstock



DirDaniele Lawson, King Richard Red Carpet Premiere Screening, AFI FEST, TCL Chinese Theatre, Los Angeles, California, USA â?? 14 Nov 2021 â?? Photo Credit: John Salangsang/AFI/Shutterstock



Jada Pinkett Smith, King Richard Red Carpet Premiere Screening, AFI FEST, TCL Chinese Theatre, Los Angeles, California, USA â?? 14 Nov 2021 â?? Photo Credit: John Salangsang/AFI/Shutterstock

King Richard tells the story of Richard Williams, the father of womenâ??s tennis superstar sisters,

Venus and Serena Williams. With a run time of 144 minutes, *King Richard* seemed to reach its conclusion too quickly â?? a tribute to how mesmerizing the film is. Numerous times the audience erupted with applause and approval as the Williams family overcame obstacle after obstacle. Will Smith portrayed Richard Williams with fortitude and tenderness â?? qualities not always evident from Richard Williamsâ?? public persona. Saniyya Sidney and Demi Singleton portray Venus and Serena in very compelling performances. Aunjanue Ellis portrays Oracene â??Brandyâ?? Williams. Ellis and Smith play off each other remarkably well. The pair were recently announced as the recipients of the 2022 Santa Barbara International Film Festivalâ??s (SBIFF) Outstanding Performers of the Year. Kudos to Casting Directors Rich Delia and Avy Kaufman!

In life, Richard Williams often came across in the media as brash, touting with a braggadociousness how his daughters were coming to dominate womenâ??s tennis, the likes of which had never been seen before, would never be seen again, and there wasnâ??t anything anyone could do about it. What he didnâ??t tell the public, and what *King Richard* tells so well, is he also wanted his daughters to have a real childhood, meaningful adolescence, and to be prepared to lead successful lives. Throughout *King Richard*, Richard Williams came across as a devoted husband, loving father, and dedicated coach delving into some of his formative life experiences growing up in a racist environment. Rearing his family in Compton, California, also had its challenges for Williams. But, Richard Williams had a plan â?? he wanted a better life for his family.

Technically speaking the film is very solid. The filmâ??s cinematography is excellent. AFI Conservatory Alumnus, Robert Elswit utilizes some natural lighting with traditional lenses and frames for establishing shots juxtaposed with fast zoom lenses to capture the action with tight framing combined with extreme closeups of the Williams sisters, generating some major pace with their groundstrokes and capturing winning overhead smashes. Editor Pamela Martin made the shots and their complementary counterparts (returns) appear seamless with the continuity editing and helped create some riveting moments with the shots provided. In addition, non-diegetic sounds kept the filmâ??s pace and helped match the filmâ??s tone and the actorsâ?? emotionality. Kris Bowers is credited with the music. Costuming, make-up, and production design are all complementary to the characters and the period covered in the film.

And, last but not least, Director Reinaldo Marcus Green, helming only his second feature film, steered *King Richard* to a beautiful conclusion culminating in Venusâ??s first professional matches and first tennis matches of any kind in three years. The excitement she (and Serena later) brought to the game of tennis encouraged an entire generation of young African-American girls that anything is possible if they are willing to put in the work. Credit to Zach Baylin for writing sharp dialogue and creating an engaging narrative.

King Richard is chock full of inspiration and hope. Ahhhâ?¦the power of film and the magic of AFI FEST â?? Hollywood. Talk about speaking truth to power in layers. Look for *King Richard* in theatres and on HBO Max Friday. Highly recommended!

Unti next time, Iâ??ll see you at the movies!

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Tags

1. Aunjanue Ellis
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