

One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest



One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest (1975)

Cast: Jack Nicholson (McMurphy), Louise Fletcher (Nurse Ratched), Danny DeVito (Martini), Brad Dourif (Billy Bibbit), Will Sampson (Chief Bromden), Christopher Lloyd (Taber), Sydney Lassick (Charles Cheswick), William Redfield (Dale Harding), Scatman Crothers (Turtle), Dean Brooks (Dr. Spivey), Vincent Schiavelli (Fredrickson), Michael Berryman (Ellis), Peter Brocco (Col. Matterson), William Duell (Jim Sefelt), Natha George (Washington), Josip Elic (Bancini), Mwako Cumbuka (Warren), Mews Small (Candy Star), Lan Fendors (Nurse Itsu), Mimi Sarkisian (Nurse Pilbow), Louisa Moritz (Rose), Delos V. Smith Jr. (Scanlon), Alonzo Brown (Miller), Dwight Marfield (Ellsworth), Ted Markland (Hap Arlich)

Directed By: Milos Forman

Written By: Ken Kesey

Rating & Screen-Time: R, 129 Minutes

★★★★☆ | Sam Bussler

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Randle McMurphy, our main character throughout “One Flew Over The Cuckoo’s Nest,” a movie inspired by Ken Kesey’s brilliant novel, is not your typical “mentally institutionalized” man. Now, to get this out of the way as soon as possible, I do realize that there *is* a novel version

of this story as I had previously stated, and I do realize that the novel and the movie are very similar and very different in many ways, but for this review I am just going to be focusing on the movie version of Kesey's story. Milos Forman's depiction of Kesey's story was, in my opinion, spot on. The only difference being who the "camera" followed 100% of the time. There were many elements to this film that made it so intriguing, whether it be the accuracy of the cast, or the countless universal truths within, this is definitely a movie I'd recommend to a friend.

As we get into the movie, we are immediately introduced to our main character, Randle McMurphy, a man who was emitted into the hospital with the label "Psycho." Shortly after we are introduced to McMurphy, we are introduced to our antagonist, the head nurse at the hospital, Nurse Ratched. It takes a while to decipher the two, but after further "examination" it isn't too hard to see that McMurphy is our protagonist, leaving Nurse Ratched as our Antagonist. Upon their first meeting, it is all downhill from there between the two of them, constant battles for power, leaving us as viewers constantly on McMurphy's side, rooting for the underdog.

Milos Forman did an exquisite job of casting all of the roles in his film, with the actors playing small roles making them significant, and the actors playing larger roles, completely blowing them out of the water. The actors playing each and every role, no matter how big or how small is one of the things that made "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest" so well done. Whether it be DeVito as the toddler-like, always happy and giggling Martini, Nicholson as the "deranged" psychopath McMurphy whose only goal is to escape the institution, or Fletcher as the manipulative, control-freak Nurse Ratched; no matter the character, no matter that characters importance, Forman's cast made them all seem extremely significant.

As viewers get into the movie, we begin to start seeing many themes portrayed throughout, as well as some critiques of very important topics within society around the time the movie was produced, as well as problems within our society today.

More often than not throughout the film, we see these obvious themes and universal truths radiating off of one specific character, that character being the infamous Nurse Ratched (played by Louise Fletcher). Nurse Ratched represents the two main themes—universal truths, rather—being the need for control, and the ability to manipulate.

Nurse Ratched's need for control is seen on numerous occasions throughout the film, especially when we as viewers begin to see her losing her control over the patients to McMurphy, the stories protagonist. For example, about halfway through the film, during one of Nurse Ratched's daily "therapy sessions" with the patients, McMurphy asks if they can move the time in which they have the work detail so that they can watch the world series game, which to the viewer is a very fair request, as the patients don't get much freedom as it is. Nurse Ratched, believing that

she could never lose control of *her* patients tells McMurphy that he'll need a majority vote in order to change the time of work detail, so McMurphy agrees. As soon as the vote begins, Nurse Ratched sees that she is losing control over her patients as they are voting with McMurphy! Upon seeing this, Nurse Ratched uses her power to stop the meeting and *take control* of the situation in her own way, telling McMurphy that the meeting ended before he could get enough votes, sending him into a fit of rage.

We also see the theme of manipulation coming from Nurse Ratched's character throughout the film, one specific scene in which the viewers are able to establish this theme is towards the very end of the movie; Billy Bibbit has overcome one of his "fears" of females and sleeps with a woman named Candy. Nurse Ratched, upon finding out about this, attacks Billy's mental state with one cruel line, that line being "Oh Billy, I just wonder how your mother is going to take this." Knowing Billy's history with his mother Nurse Ratched in this scene victimizes him, causing him to feel guilty for what he has done, eventually leading him to take his own life.

Throughout Forman's film, we see the societal critique of how the mentally-ill are treated/taken care of: Over-manipulated, and over-medicated. We see throughout the film the over-manipulation with the presence of Nurse Ratched's character, pair that with over-medication and we are left with no difference between someone who is in a mental institution, and a walking zombie who follows every order of those who are "above" them, no matter whether that instruction be benefitting to them or not.

In the years since the release of this film, we've seen no difference in how our mentally-ill are treated, even with the results of that treatment being shown on screen! Today, someone can walk into a doctor's office claiming a mental illness and with little-to-no investigation are written a prescription for medicine that will "help" them with their illness, when in reality it is just numbing them, slowly turning them into a zombie who is being blocked off from the real-world. Forman's film isn't just a story, it's a warning—maybe even a foreshadowing—of a possible future if nothing is done about the treatment of the "mentally-ill."

Milos Forman's "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" is a brilliantly intriguing story with many impactful takeaways throughout, I definitely recommend taking the time to watch this film.