

IFE FILM REVIEW: MUDDLED, CONFUSING ALOHA GETS LOST IN PARADISE

News / Personalities



Hollywood has a long, rich history of great filmmakers completely losing their minds on location, especially in remote, tropical locales. A whisky-swilling John Huston spent more time hunting elephants than directing while shooting *The African Queen* in the Belgian Congo; Werner Herzog literally lost his mind in the Peruvian rainforest on the set of *Fitzcarraldo*; and Francis Ford Coppola was nuttier than Brando's performance on the set of *Apocalypse Now* in the Philippines. But despite the madness unfurling behind-the-scenes, the finished films proved to be well worth the drama, with *Apocalypse* and *Queen* scoring a combined 12 Oscar nominations (and three wins!) between them and Herzog taking home the Best Director prize at 1982's Cannes Film Festival.

That's why when the Sony hacking scandal shone a bright light on the trouble-plagued Hawaiian shoot of writer-director Cameron Crowe's *Aloha*, most fans gave Crowe the benefit of the doubt. Unfortunately, for all involved, the behind-the-scenes crazy on this one bleeds through to the finished product in every frame. I'm not saying *Aloha* is all bad or is even Crowe's worst movie (that honor belongs to 2005's God-awful *Elizabethtown*) but, let's just say all the mana in the islands couldn't save this dud from itself.

So, how did a romantic comedy set in a tropical paradise with three of the hottest actors in Hollywood (Bradley Cooper, Emma Stone and Rachel McAdams) fail so miserably? While there's always plenty of blame to go around when a film goes wrong, weighing the evidence from the hacked emails, this time around, it looks like the blame lands squarely on writer-director Crowe's Oscar-winning shoulders. If nothing else, Crowe's original screenplay sounds like it was deeply

flawed from the get-go.

Long, over-complicated and sometimes head-scratchingly bizarre, *Aloha* goes down like a watered-down Mai Tai at the hotel pool. It tastes a little off and you know it's missing something, but it's still a Mai Tai and hey, look at that gorgeous sunset! Luckily for Crowe and company, a little tropical scenery goes a long way onscreen, especially on an airplane. Thanks to the sumptuous work of acclaimed French cinematographer Eric Gautier (*Into the Wild*, *The Motorcycle Diaries*), the islands have never looked lovelier than they do here. Even if you're not jetting off to Hawaii while watching *Aloha*, you'll wish you were.

And though the talented cast try their best to make sense of the hopelessly-muddled script and strange, loopy storyline, *Aloha* falls flat so many times that you'll hardly care who ends up with whom by the time the final credits role. Which is really saying something when you have two of the most stunning actresses in Hollywood (Stone and McAdams) vying for the affections of 2011's Sexiest Man Alive!

Oddly enough, the controversy that flared up earlier in the year about Stone, who is of Swedish-German descent, playing a mixed-race Hawaiian in the film is the least of *Aloha*'s problems. In fact, some of the funniest bits in the movie revolve around people giving Stone's character (who prides herself on being one quarter Hawaiian) a hard time over her ferocious "island pride." Really, it's kind of a non-issue, and if anything, Stone's character is probably the warmest and most fully-realized of the bunch, especially in the first third of the film.

And though *Aloha* has a few moments that are quintessentially Crowe — the wordless, subtitled scene between Cooper and John Krasinski is hilarious and everything with McAdam's onscreen children, played by newcomers Danielle Rose Russell and Jaeden Leiberher, is beautifully written — true fans of the auteur behind modern classics like *Say Anything* and *Jerry McGuire* will just have to blame this one on the tropics.

Now playing on select Air France, KLM, Qantas and United flights worldwide, *Aloha* is also available via streaming at Amazon Instant Video and Google Play.

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