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Intro to Film
Shea
The Martian Film Review

The Martian was a fantastic science fiction piece. It brought beautiful Martian landscapes with a killer performance from Matt Damon. It was adapted from a novel of the same name by Andy Weir. I did not know it was adapted from a novel going in.

Matt Damon's performance as Mark Watney was incredibly well done. Considering for most of the film, Damon is acting in isolation. His performance is dependent on his ability to act solely in front of a camera and crew and not interacting with other actors to progress the story. But, he did incredible. His character brought a lot of wit and snide remarks that brought a good sense of humor to the dire situation. The video logs he records would give insight into his thought process and how he was comprehending the situation. It was a clever tool to inform the audience since Damon's character was not communicating with another person. For the purpose of the story, his logs acted as a means to inform who would find his footage what happened and for the audience it acted as a means to inform them on his thoughts.

I did not take much notice to other performances. I was really captivated by Damon's character and his wit and charm. If the movie focused only on him and he found a way to save himself with no assistance from other characters on earth, I think I would have still enjoyed the film. The other characters were likable, but focusing so much on Damon and his character's charm distracted me from the others.

The cinematography of Mars was really well done. The exposition shots of Mars showed beautiful landscapes that were rich in color. It also gave a feeling of isolation to sympathize with Damon's character. Surrounded by vast openness and no one to share it with, it makes a person feel so small in comparison. Showing time progression was handled well also. Showing video footage sped up to show hours of time passing and putting text on the screen stating what sol (solar day) it was to show great lengths of time. There were also subtle ways of showing time passage: Watney's potato farm, the time log text on video recordings, Watney's body shrinking from malnourishment.

Themes of survival and creative ingenuity were heavily emphasized as well as isolation and communication. How Watney communicates by leaving prerecorded videos to track his progress to whoever might find them is how the audience is clued into his thought process, how Watney eventually communicates with a team on earth by first rotating a camera off a lander to text messaging, and the communication between NASA and the China National Space Administration, cross-cultural communication. Watney comes up with creative ways to ensure his survival. Rationing food, making a potato farm, modifying equipment for long distance journeys, and his overall wit in deducing that he is the greatest botanist on the planet (being the only one on the planet) and that he is a space pirate for taking an spaceship in international "waters" (space) without permission.

The film ends with Watney giving lectures on survival. Survival is the strongest theme of the film. Having the will to survive and the determination to make a way to survive. And then on the flip side of tragedy, having a new appreciation for life and making it count because life is short. Truly a spectacular film.