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## The crow stairway to heaven review

By Adam DiLeoUpdated: May 15, 2012 4:15 AMPosted: 31 Jul 2007 5:41 pmBy this much I am convinced: if Brandon Lee had not died while filming The Crow, he would have transitioned from budding martial arts star to mainstream Hollywood icon immediately after its release. He had the intensity, insane appearance and intuitive acting skills of his famous father. By now he would score Oscar nominations and speak out against global warming, and the franchise he began would have produced blockbuster sequels on par with The Matrix. But even without its unusually talented star, The Crow still managed to create a small litany of sequels, even if each was of more questionable quality than the last. The series would hit its ultimate low with Ed Furlong's terrible turn in 2004's Wicked Prayer, but the serial adaptation starring Mark Dacascos wasn't far off that terrifying low mark. Originally aired between the second and third cinematic installments of the series, Stairflight to Heaven begins with the original film's story and stretches it out indefinitely: instead of just seeking revenge for his murder and the murder of his wife, Shelley (Sabine Karsenti), this Crow is more of an opportunist do-gooder, correcting errors as he comes upon them. The first episode is in many ways nothing more than a rehash of the first film, setting up all familiar players – Detective Albrecht (Marc Gomes), street urchin Sarah (Katie Stuart) and her troubled mother, Darla (Lynda Boyd), who in this incarnation is just an alcoholic rather than a full-blown heroin addict. The only tweak, and it's a bit of a big one, is that instead of hastily applied face painting meant to reflect his inner torment and just generally look cool, Stairway's deceased rocker, Eric Draven (Dacascos), actually sprouts black nails and bleeds black and white dye when he gets excited, not unlike David Banner and The Incredible Hulk, or possibly Jekyll and Hyde. It's a convenient way to give him an alter ego to fight against, which is another departure from the movies. At the end of the first episode, Draven has sent his transgressors (although all in non-lethal ways positively reek of family-conscious TELEVISION) and it seems that his soul could go back to the land of the dead. But, for reasons that pass understanding, he stays behind for what the series creators hoped would be several seasons of freelance paranormal ass-kicking. It all still has something to do with reuniting with Shelley in the afterlife, but it's a weak link at best and really that overall goals only provide a background to set up all kinds of other worldly enemies and plotlines. The show lasted only a single season, and after watching the DVD collection, it's easy to see why. The appeal of the original Crow movie, and the graphic novel as it was based, is the evil, dark hero who visits visiting the enemies' own brutality back on them without hesitation or regret. To cut down on that darkness, although it is necessary to pull the story out, is to dilute everything that made the film such a cult phenomenon. Seeing Draven tools around during the daytime in jeans and a flannel shirt is just wrong. You wonder how he pays his rent and if he has to file taxes this year. In fairness, the series makes an attempt to justify Eric's protracted presence in the living world with a trial in which Eric is suspected of having fled after murdering Shelley, but that doesn't make his overwhelming normality more bearable. In this odd stretch, it's possible to see the formula that has become the standard issue for movie-to-TV adaptations: take out only the elements that send the plot rushing uncontrollably toward a final life-or-death confrontation, and extend the hero's authority to include everyone he encounters. In this way, Draven can help with exploited psychics, abducted housewives and abused children, while allowing for some easy-going detours here and there. This is the formula that makes the Dead Zone series work, but Johnny wasn't reincarnated spirit of revenge, so the occasional trip to the beach didn't spoil the appeal of the story. Dacascos is an interesting study in how a good action star can go horribly wrong. You may remember this handsome Hawaiian martial artist from the Only the Strong and the Double Dragon movie, if you remember him at all. He's a few steps beyond your average martial arts movie star—he can speak each of his lines without tripping over his own tongue—but, despite his fluent athletic prowess, he's still nowhere near a strong enough actor to wear an hour-long comic drama. And while Lee's Draven pulled off the tortured, lanky rocker looking perfect, dacascos looking less alternative rock and more clean-cut musical theater. His boyish appearance and rather doe eyes don't do much to alleviate the problem. None of this is to say that the show's star is not a first-rate martial artist, as he really is. But there's yet another problem-choice to turn the film, which barely relied on recognizable martial arts at all, into a kick-first-question-questions-later genre piece is bizarre in itself. Perhaps this was done to remove the show from the film's penchant for bullets and dead bodies, but the result is, like the other aspects of the show, sterilized, formulaic and more or less uninteresting. Rating: 5 out of 10 We encourage you to read our updated PRIVACY POLICY and COOKIE POLICY. This series was pathetic. It had bad acting, overworked special effects and wimp villains. As one of the original film, I found the series as a dull watered-down version of an excellent story. In the film, not only did Brandon Lee kill people, he looked as if he could, while this wannabe Mark looks like he couldn't beat himself out of a paper bag. Anyway, if you want action go see brandon lee version, as Stairway to Heaven is more of a soap opera. As I said, the series is simply watered down, and it only contains scenes from the original film, but has carved out some of the interesting characters and more energetic fights and trash talk. but if you'd rather not think too much then hey, why not watch Stairway to Heaven. Really though, its just too soppy for me. In Crow, both film and comic, Eric Draven was a tortured, evil person who wanted to tear apart the people who had ruined his life/death. But Mark Dacascus's character is content to simply scare them into becoming better people. It's not that for me. If someone had brutally murdered you and your fiancé, wouldn't you be walking around in the red haeme? I think you would, and I know I would too. I think maybe this series was aimed at a younger audience that would justify toned down violence, less offensive drugs and less gruesome weapons. But really, they were the things that made the movies as dark and confrontas they were. Well. I guess you can't win them all. 10 out of 18 thought it was helpful. Was this review helpful? Sign in to vote. Permalink I think The Crow is one of those movies that everyone wishes no sequels or spin-offs were made, but as they were, we're trying to make the most of them. Stairway to Heaven – so far the only TV-based entry to the franchise – is easy to hate if you're too steadfast one of the original film, but there are enough good things about the show that I liked it. True, much of the writing is flawed, it can be much more stylized, and it scrambles to earn these four stars, but in the end, the hard work and passion of its creators shine through and I'm disappointed that only this one season was produced. The story: murdered musician Eric Draven (Mark Dacascos, Brotherhood of the Wolf ) returns from the dead with uncanny powers to restore the balance between good and evil – a task that must be completed if he is to be reunited with his late girlfriend (Sabine Karsenti, Battlefield Earth). The casting of the leading man is arguably the most important part of the show, because while Vincent Perez, Eric Mabius, and Edward Furlong are usually not hailed as worthy successors to the late Brandon Lee, Mark Dacascos is the only one who actually plays the same role as Lee. Brandon had too much character and charisma to be replaced, but I would argue that Dacascos is a good choice to continue the part. He's an amazing martial artist with reasonable acting chops, and he even looks like Lee. While Dacascos has trouble replicating Brandon's sensitive sense of humor (his worst acting moments are when he tries stupid), he shows surprising depth by growing with acting in scenarios that Lee's Draven never faced and comes across satisfactorily strong. He is the main reason I would have liked to see the series continued. The rest of the cast tend to do well, although they also bear the burden of replicating existing roles. Like dacascos, the best thing the show does for these artists is to allow them to make the parts their own over time, so that Marc Gomes (Sue Thomas: F.B. Eye) fully realizes his own version of Albrecht and Katie Stuart (A Wrinkle In Time) his own version of Sarah. Sabine Karsenti can take Shelly to places that Sofia Shinas never had the opportunity to. The only artists who don't come across positively are those who play existing roles but have limited screen time, like John Pyper-Ferguson ( Alphas ) playing Top Dollar for only a handful of episodes. As the last sentence states, the story from the original film is not the focus of the show's story: only the first two episodes are given over to Eric's first revenge arc. Afterwards, the series takes a while to find its footing. At first it seemed that Stairway to Heaven would become an odd version of Renegade with Eric. Albrecht and Sarah correcting some new errors each episode, but after the seventh program, ongoing arcs and subplots of apparent supernatural tone are introduced. Several plot twists are pretty darn cool – the coolest one that is probably the introduction of the show's first female Crow character ( Bobbie Phillips is well cast ) – but sometimes some downright weird ideas are set afloat, like when an evil occultist attempts to raise the spirit of Grigori Rasputin or Eric gets involved in a soul-switching experiment. I didn't care about some of the deconstruction of Crow, not to mention the fact that a surprising number of characters are becoming aware of his existence and identity, but certainly the biggest thing to come across is the look of the show. While almost all movies took place in central urban environments, at night, most of Stairway to Heaven takes place in bright daylight and in a number of less impressive venues. This takes a bit of getting used to, and some viewers may never, but having said that, I don't think many of the stories that unfold during the day would have been improved especially by turning off the lights. The action content is initially a weakness of the series. Although the franchise is not firmly identified with martial arts, the introduction of Mark Dacascos more or less required that the fight scenes be quite stylized. Initially, this was not capitalized on, leading to many bad shot brawls. But after the first half-dozen or so episodes, the filmmakers learned to pull the camera back and be less choppy with editing. Each episode has at least two fights, usually three, and while no brawl is what I would call a Class-A affair Dacascos suffers from a deficit of credible opponents on screen, it's nice to see him cut loose with his smooth shapes. Mark also seems to do most of his own tumbling and gymnastics stunts, which is a plus for fans like me. As of this writing, the show has been out of production for 15 years, and by now the latest, even die-hard fans should lose hope that the series will ever be renewed. It's a shame, especially considering this season's cliffhanger and disappointment that the following movies were, but this DVD set is a nice thing to own. Again, stiff fans of the first movie may not like this, but fans of action-thriller series and 90s TV shows may become followers yet. Yet.

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