

Edward Scissorhands (12)

Six members watched, and largely enjoyed, Edward Scissorhands. Tim Burton's film, starring Jonny Depp, Dianne Wiest, Winona Ryder and Alan Arkin, with a cameo by Vincent Price, is billed as modern day fairy tale of an outsider with extraordinary talents. In reality, it is also a savage satire on suburban America and its values. Ostensibly...

A reclusive inventor (Price) creates a humanoid but dies before completing him, leaving him with scissors for hands, so Edward (Jonny Depp) lives alone and secluded in the inventor's decaying mansion. When an Avon Lady, played by Dianne Wiest, calls at the mansion and finds Edward, she decides to invite him to live with her family (including her daughter, played by Winona Ryder). So begins Edward's adventure in the pastel paradise of American suburbia.

In reality...

What Burton skilfully shows is the archetypal shallow nature of the stay-at-home American housewife of the 50s and 60s (Wiest's character being the exception) and the spiteful bullying of someone different by an apparently stand-up teenager (the third member of the love triangle involving Depp's and Ryder's characters). Happy to embrace someone different as long as there is something in it for them, as soon as something appears to go wrong, the townsfolk turn on Edward and his adoptive family. Indeed, the only non-family member who is truly sympathetic to Edward and his plight is the local policeman — who is also the only African-American character in the otherwise deliberately white film.

Burton's third film, and Depp's first as a major star, certainly has flaws (but it doesn't take itself too seriously anyway). Some American critics called it left-of-centre and too cliched — in my opinion, showing that they didn't understand the irony intended and — consummately — delivered.