

School Ties: Making the Grade

by STAN LIVINGSTONE

One item must be cleared up before this review is to be advanced any further. This movie is not a reinvention of *Dead Poet's Society* (****) so just let it go and move on with your life. The shattered pieces of your existence will be put back together eventually. Although many reviewers feel compelled to form some sort of late-80s nostalgia and rush to compare these two films, the likenesses fail to go beyond the setting -- albeit visuals are stimulating but they alone do not tell the story.

School Ties is brought to the screen by the previously successful team of Sherry Lansing and Stanley Jaffe (*Black Rain*, *The Accused*, and *Fatal Attraction*) and their success in partnership once again shines through in this movie dealing with anti-semitism and put quite simply -- fitting in. *School Ties*, set in the 1950s at a prestigious Ivy League prep school in New England (where else?) presents David Greene played by encino man Brendan Fraser (a Canadian!!) as a young Jewish man removed from his home in blue-collar central Scranton, Pennsylvania, to St. Matthew's, a fictional private school attended mainly by clean-cut, wealthy, Protestant boys. David, attending on a football scholarship has to not only prove himself to the scholarship providing alumni but also to his fellow students who share neither his economic nor his religious backgrounds.

David then struggles to belong in a group he felt didn't fully accept in the beginning let alone after he is made to look like a liar and a traitor. The sad reality is then displayed all too well of the attitudes instilled during the rearing of a child for racism was as much a part of many of these boys as social etiquette. This film manages to go beyond pointing out the existence of hatred and ignorance carried by people -- that is something everyone is well aware of. It instead asks why and how these attitudes are adopted and accepted.

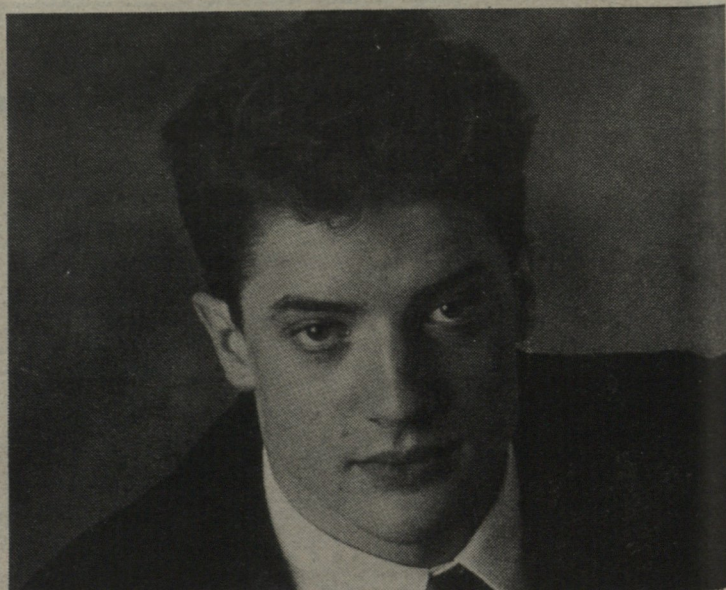
This film carries with it a lesson for all that see it. It demonstrates that in a society where people refuse to see the truth, the society becomes nothing more than a facade overflowing with prejudice and superficiality.

This film, although at points nearing the filmic cliché quota, does a fine job at creating awareness and at the same time presenting a touching story and soon to be known actors destined for possible stardom.

Rating ***

Ratings Guide
***** Classic
**** Excellent
*** Go see it
** Wait for the video release
* Don't waste good pub money

he man who put the *con* in *constitution*



Brendan Fraser