

EDWARD SCISSORHANDS

US, 1990, d. Tim Burton.



Edward Scissorhands is a different kind of film. It is a contemporary fairy tale, with touches of the Gothic and the magic castle, as well as a spoof on modern suburbia and consumerism. The two blend very nicely.

The film is based on a story by Tim Burton, former animator who went on to make Pee Wee's Big Adventure, Beattlejuice and Batman. Edward Scissorhands follows his theory of animation brought alive - with the consequent freedom of imagination. The story was co-written by Caroline Thompson, a novelist, who wrote the screenplay (and the screenplay for the remake of The Addams Family).



The film is imaginatively designed - in gentle spoof with underlying seriousness and with an attention to fairytale magic. Johnny Depp is very good at communicating the personality (or lack of personality) of the innocent Edward Scissorhands, a composite boy made by an eccentric inventor played, with customary relish, by Vincent Price. (Burton had made a short animated film about a boy called Vincent who wanted to grow up like Vincent Priced - and the film was narrated by Price himself.) The cast is particularly good, especially Diane Weist as the Avon Lady who brings Edward Scissorhands into her home. At the beginning of the film, she sets the tone and makes it all credible. Winona Ryder is attractive as her daughter, teenage star Anthony Michael Hall becomes a big heavy, Cathy Baker and Conchata Ferrell, usually most sympathetic, enjoy themselves as pastel-coloured suburban housewives.

The film has echoes of such mythic films as ET, the many films which introduce a stranger into society who acts as a catalyst for the members of that society. With its focus on good and evil, right and wrong, innocence and guilt, the film also echoes Gospel imagery and stories.