

The Mighty Quinn ★★

Year of Release: 1989

Review by Randy Parker

Country: USA

Verdict: Skip It

If you love reggae music or the exotic scenery of the Caribbean, then you may want to check out *The Mighty Quinn*, an incoherent comedy/who-done-it detective mystery starring Denzel Washington as Jamaica's chief of police. The movie is set against the beat of reggae music and the exotic backdrop of beach resorts, bars, and plush landscapes. The plot involves Quinn's investigation of a gruesome murder. The prime suspect is his mischievous childhood friend Maubee, played by Robert Townsend of *Hollywood Shuffle* fame. As Quinn proceeds with his investigation, he encounters a wide assortment of characters: some are villains, some are friends, some are family, and some are altogether irrelevant to the plot.

The Mighty Quinn is frustratingly indecisive and confused. It repeatedly shifts gears between light-hearted comedy, domestic drama, and gritty, somber thrills. The various pieces of the puzzle never come together, and consequently, *The Mighty Quinn* is disjointed and uneven. The movie is most effective as a comic endeavor; it is sporadically amusing, especially the scenes involving Townsend. The film's dialogue is occasionally quite clever as well. The murder investigation subplot, on the other hand, is generic, poorly executed, and clashes with the film's otherwise light, comic tone.

To make matters worse, *The Mighty Quinn* is

cluttered with irrelevant plot strands and superfluous characters. For instance, the film attempts to depict Quinn's marital problems, but its attempts are superficial and feeble at best. Mimi Rogers appears in the movie as the murder victim's seductive wife, but she should have stayed home, as her character is almost completely non-germane to the plot. As you can probably surmise, *The Mighty Quinn* is a movie in dire need of tighter direction and editing.

However, I should be careful not to paint an overly gloomy picture; *The Mighty Quinn* does have its merits, even beyond its sumptuous scenery. Washington's charismatic performance as Quinn almost holds the film together. His wit and charm are endearing. With a twinkle in his eye and a tongue firmly planted in his cheek, Townsend also injects life into the movie. Unfortunately, Townsend's appearances on screen are disappointingly infrequent. *The Mighty Quinn* also deserves credit for being one of those rare Hollywood movies to revolve around black characters and feature a predominantly black cast. And of course, there's the omnipresent soundtrack which features a continuous onslaught of reggae, everything from UB40 to Michael Rose. Still, all in all, you might be better off spending a few hours watching the Travel Channel.