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The Big Lebowski

The Big Lebowski follows the adventures of Jeffrey Lebowski, or as he calls himself, “The Dude” (Jeff Bridges), as told by an anonymous cowboy (Sam Eliot). An unemployed pacifist who looks perpetually as if he has just rolled out of bed, “The Dude” finds himself in trouble when he is confused for a millionaire (David Huddleston), who happens to also be named Jeffrey Lebowski, by two thugs demanding payment for the debt accrued by the wealthier Lebowski’s wife (Tara Reid). The two criminals quickly discover their error, but not before one of them pees on The Dude’s carpet in an act of intimidation. Determined to reap compensation for the damage, he soon finds himself more entangled in the affairs of his wealthier counterpart than he’d care to be.

As The Dude is drawn into a quest to resolve the kidnapping of Jeffrey Lebowski’s wife, the plot quickly snowballs in complexity. The different threads can be difficult to unravel at times, but the film doesn’t rely on constant understanding. As long as you can identify the characters on screen, the film entertains, and manages to quickly bring all the elements back to mind when the resolution approaches. Laugh-out-loud

moments are plentiful, from physical comedy and sight gags, such as Walter's attempt to scatter a friend's ashes at sea, only to have them blow backward into the face of The Dude standing behind him, to plenty of dialogue ranging from absurd to terribly witty (when one of them holds up a bowling ball and asks what it is, he replies "obviously you're not a golfer").

The film is populated with an array of truly unique and hysterically funny characters. From Walter (John Goodman), the self-righteous and slightly crazy Vietnam veteran who captains The Dude's bowling team, and seems intent to complicate his life with poor advice and erratic commando behavior (for example, drawing a gun over a scoring dispute during a bowling game), to Maude Lebowski (Julianne Moore), the avant-garde artist daughter of millionaire Jeffrey Lebowski, who spends her free time painting naked while flying across the room in a harness, to Donny (Steve Buscemi), the third man on Walter and The Dude's bowling team, who seems to almost be making an effort to be a third wheel. From there down there isn't a single character that doesn't grab the audiences attention, however brief their screen time may be. In all seriousness, nihilist techno musicians turned kidnappers is about as mundane as the background characters get.

Writing aside, direction is the films strongest point. It is elegantly shot, with each frame composed to be as visually interesting as possible, but never overpowering to the action. The audience isn't asked to watch a whole movie looking out of the finger hole in

a bowling ball, but the few seconds spent in that perspective, images blurring by as the ball rolls down the lane, are wonderful. Couple this with a masterful use of color, particularly the 50s motif inside of the bowling alley, and you get a film that is somehow hauntingly beautiful, even at the height of its comedic ridiculousness.

Despite its colorful characters, the writing does fail to give them sufficient arc. Characters remain roughly constant throughout the film, with little sign of change. Since the film is set up from the beginning as a celebration of a character, it does not suffer as a result, but the impact could have been stronger with some internal realization for the characters to come to. Still, *The Big Lebowski* is a hilarious and visually stunning film that is definitely worth the price of admission.