

Movie Review: "Wonder Boys"

by KYLE HORTON

Correspondent

"Wonder Boys" is the story of a perpetually cynical writer/professor at a New England liberal arts college who finds himself steeped in a mid-life crisis in the middle of the winter term.

The entire movie takes place over a weekend in which Grady Tripp's, played by Michael Douglas, wife leaves him, his girlfriend finds out she is pregnant and his editor swings into town with a tuba-playing transvestite. The film could best be described as a coming-of-age story, only the main character is fifty years old.

"Wonder Boys" portrays a weekend in the life of Grady Tripp that will ultimately change his entire life. Having written a critically acclaimed novel seven years earlier, Grady is obsessed with writing a masterpiece follow-up. He suffers from a sort of reverse writer's block: he can't stop writing aimlessly.

Douglas gives one of the best performances of his career as Grady Tripp. The role proves that Douglas' range as an actor is not limited to the cold businessman routine with which he is most commonly identified. The prime example of his lizard in a suit persona is his Academy Award winning portrayal of Gordon Gekko in the 1987 Oliver Stone drama "Wall Street." Playing Grady, Douglas stretches his legs a bit and ventures into a character who is sentimental and emotionally troubled.

Through much of the film, Grady is accompanied by an exceptionally talented student, James Leer, played by Tobey Maguire, who is also a compulsive liar. Leer remains stoic in except for the occasional smile and laughter at inappropriate times. Maguire has graduated from the wide-eyed schoolboy gaze of "The Cider House Rules" and to a creepy stare that leaves the audience wondering what he is actually thinking.

"Wonder Boys" begins with Grady's attempt to teach a writing workshop after his wife has left him. That evening he attends a party at the home of his girlfriend, played by Frances McDormand, and her husband, who happens to be Grady's boss. Over the course of the weekend, Grady joins Leer in a series of mishaps which involve a mock assassination, several thefts and a lot of marijuana.

The film is directed by Curtis Hanson, who also directed the Academy Award winning "L.A. Confidential." Hanson's effort to depart from the malicious, plot-driven material of "L.A. Confidential" may have been a mistake. "Wonder Boys" seems to wander aimlessly without giving the characters enough depth and development.

At its best, "Wonder Boys" is funny, unpredictable and affectionate. At its worst, the film ventures into lackluster slapstick that the audience would expect from a National Lampoon's comedy rather than a finely tuned academic comedy. The plot lines are far-fetched and the characters underdeveloped, but at the very least, it may be worth the price of a ticket just to see Michael Douglas cloaked in a flowery pink bathrobe.

LPFM, from page 15:

but I'm not very optimistic. I really just don't see big corporations allowing small stations like us to take away their listeners. It's all about the money," said sophomore Kristen Bilous.

There has been negative response to the licensing of LPFM by the National Public Radio (NPR), National Association of Broadcasting (NAB) and in Congress.

"I think right now the likelihood of anybody getting it [LPFM] is pretty low, and I say that on the basis of what's happening in Congress," said Student Media Coordinator Bill DiNome.

On March 16, NPR requested that the FCC reconsider delaying the licensing of LPFM. Kevin Klose, president of NPR said in a press release that "the FCC's current rules threaten to disrupt existing service to public radio listeners, especially those in rural areas served by translator stations, and blind or visually-impaired Americans who utilize radio reading services."

The FCC responded to the issues with a statement by Dale Hatfield, chief of the office of engineering and technology, and Roy Stewart, chief of mass media bureau. The statement said that the radio reading services that inform the aurally and visually impaired will not be affected by LPFM according to

FCC testing that has also determined "that existing stations will not experience harmful interference."

According to DiNome, the NAB is bringing cases to court.

"If they haven't already, they will. They have already promised to get an adjunction. NAB is one of the largest Congressional lobbying organizations in the country. They are largely accusing LPFM of causing interference," DiNome said.

The Oxley Bill was introduced to the House of Representatives in November of 1999 by Rep. Michael G. Oxley, and to the Senate in Feb. by Senator Judd Gregg. The purpose of the bill is to prevent the FCC from authorizing LPFM.

The bill has 158 House co-sponsors and 23 Senate co-sponsors, seven of who are Republicans from North Carolina.

"There are other problems, too, like getting the university behind us. Idealistically, they would like to. But we don't have a broadcast communications major here. We don't have the funds to support it. Without the academic piece it would mean we would have to pay for it ourselves. There are ways around it, but I think in many ways the university's hands are pretty well tied," DiNome said.

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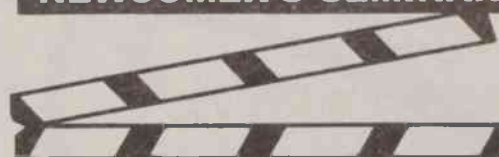
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