

# Movie Delivers 'Message' Sans Mush Note to Disney: Stay With Cartoon Films

By JUSTIN WINTERS  
Staff Writer

For real men, romantic movies come in two flavors. There is the type that is so overly sappy, you feel you have been unjustly taken advantage of afterwards. The other type, which "Message in a Bottle" most closely resembles, moves you in such a way that you don't mind recommending it to your mom, grandmother and all your female friends.

### MOVIE REVIEW

"Message in a Bottle"



Kevin Costner and Robin Wright Penn fall in love in "Message in a Bottle." Judging by his performance, Costner should stick to more "average guy" roles like this rather than trying to play a hero.

Mixing together a popular story based on a Nicholas Sparks bestseller with two attractive stars (Kevin Costner and Robin Wright Penn) makes "Message" an above-average choice for movie-going couples.

Set in what is meant to be the Outer Banks (but actually filmed on the beautiful coast of Maine), the story revolves around Theresa (Penn), a divorced journalist who is at the point during her life when dating is a foregone option.

This changes when, while on vacation, she finds a washed-up bottle containing a loved one's lost letter.

After a little research (she practically stalks the guy) she meets the letter's writer, Garret (Costner), a poetic ship-builder who has problems communicating his feelings.

The plot moves on to include love,

lots of water and an ending that ends up being mildly surprising.

The acting, however, won me over. Costner should really think about sticking to the regular guy roles ("Field of Dreams") rather than the post-apocalyptic hero roles ("Waterworld"). He shines here as the type of guy whom you would not mind bringing home to Mom. He's not going to win an Oscar for the role, but give the guy points for effort. He even cooks.

His chemistry with the gorgeous Penn also makes the movie better. Mainly known as Jenny from "Forrest Gump," she made me a new admirer by playing a role that would have normally gone to an actress such as Meg Ryan.

Paul Newman steals the movie like a man intent on winning next year's Best Supporting Actor Oscar. When he wasn't on screen, I was either thinking about his last appearance or eagerly anticipating his next.

While audiences will probably expect deeper meaning from this syrupy-sweet movie starring the guy who dances with wolves, I left feeling good about the romance genre in general because it set the mushy-meter at five rather than 10.

I even called my mama and told her to run out and go see the movie. Man, I felt like such a wuss.

The Diversions Editors can be reached at [artsdesk@unc.edu](mailto:artsdesk@unc.edu).

By MATT MILLER  
Senior Writer

There has always been a sort of caste system at work in the hierarchy of Disney films. On the upper tier you've got your "animated classics," which Disney dangles before salivating children before rereleasing them every seven years.

### MOVIE REVIEW

"My Favorite Martian"



On the lower tier are the insipid live action films starring washed-up actors in wacky situations so formulaic that an 8-year-old can predict how they will end 20 minutes into the movie.

When I was a kid, we always used to rent those cruddier films - "The Apple Dumplin' Gang," "The Million-Dollar Duck," all those Herbie the Love Bug movies - and somehow, I enjoyed them. Maybe it was the low production values or the "I really need this job" look on Tim Conway's face (he still has that look).

Not true with the current crop of Disney live-action crap, though. The Mouse factory has taken great care to make these films look state-of-the-art.

Take "My Favorite Martian," a remake of the '60s television show. This flick overflows with "Men in Black"-ish special effects, most of which look pretty good.

Too bad the plot just reshapes one of Disney's earlier low budget live action

movies, 1978's "The Cat From Outer Space."

Jeff Daniels plays Tim O'Hara, a local news producer who, after stumbling upon a crashed alien spaceship, befriends an uppity Martian (Christopher Lloyd) whom he dubs "Uncle Martin." Tim must help Uncle Martin fix his spaceship and get back to Mars, and in return, Martin tries to help Tim woo a camerawoman who has a crush on him (Darryl Hannah). Along the way, they've got to avoid government scientists and a pesky reporter (Elizabeth Hurley). Nuttiness ensues!

When asked to explain his take on the film, Director Donald Petrie ("The Associate") said, "At the core of this movie are two people from different worlds ... literally!" This movie is bad, full-tilt bad, worse even than that joke. The only things that garner it a one-foot rating are the cameo by Ray Walston (Uncle Martin on the old TV series), some cool special effects and Elizabeth Hurley (when she's not speaking).

I have the feeling that the vast majority of The Daily Tar Heel's readership knew before reading this review that "My Favorite Martian" was not a film that they wanted to see. They were right.

But if you really feel the need to watch a bad Disney movie about aliens, do yourself a favor and rent "The Cat from Outer Space."

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## Fans Should 'Rush' to See New Dark Comedy

By JEREMY HURTZ  
Staff Writer

Poignant characterization, hilarious visual humor and a bravura performance from Bill Murray make Wes Anderson's new film "Rushmore" the best comedy since "There's Something About Mary." And, in some ways, a better one.

### MOVIE REVIEW

"Rushmore"



on academic probation.

Then a woman enters his life: Miss Cross (Olivia Williams), an attractive first-grade teacher. Max uses all that remains of his clout at the school in an effort to win her over, but she's not really falling for it.

Murray rounds out the cast of characters as self-loathing steel magnate Mr. Blume. At first, he takes Max under his wing, but their relationship becomes hostile when Blume falls in love with Miss Cross as well.

The film sways from farce to satire to serious drama. In all cases, though, the tiny details shine best. After Blume's first conversation with Cross, he starts to walk away - making it only a few yards before breaking into a run, leaping like a boy smitten with puppy love.

All three main roles contain bits that could easily grow melodramatic, but the actors make their characters believable in crucial, often ridiculous moments. Murray (looking quite haggard in a Golden Globe-nominated performance) pulls off the difficult trick of allowing audiences to simultaneously laugh at and feel sorry for an old rich guy.

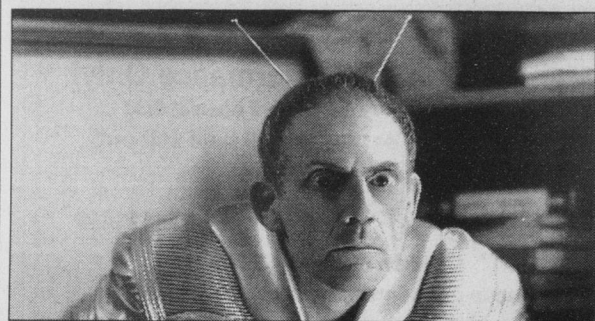
It helps, of course, that writer/director Anderson ("Bottle Rocket") gives him excellent material to work with. For instance, Murray's perfect delivery takes one line from good and funny to good, funny and very sad. Again, he lends memorable quality to a solid scene in which Blume discovers Max has been lying about his parentage.

Anderson also displays true cinematic flair. He slips homages and parodies

into the film at random, subtly enough that those who don't catch on aren't left behind. The film slyly references Oliver Stone and Stanley Kubrick in one scene, while another pays tribute to Nirvana and "The Graduate."

Anderson occasionally becomes a bit too obvious when handling more serious moments. A few scenes end on weak, even cheesy lines, when silence would have delivered greater impact. However, the audience quickly forgets these minor flaws in the wake of such a funny, touching film.

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Christopher Lloyd stars as "Uncle Martin" in Disney's latest abysmal attempt at a live-action feature film, "My Favorite Martian."

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