

Sayles film a realistic teen story

By STEVE CARR
Staff Writer

Only a handful of American films have defied the movie industry's penchant for portraying teenagers as either dead or horny. And that's too bad, considering that teenagers are Hollywood's biggest customers. Only a few films, such as Frank Perry's devastating *Last Summer* and Peter Yates' completely winning *Breaking Away*, have explored the forbidden regions of how teenagers really talk

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and act. So when a film like John Sayles' *Baby It's You* contains that special adolescent authenticity and also bears the 20th Century-Fox logotype, there is reason to rejoice.

Sayles is probably the hottest American director working now. His sharp, savvy screenplays have become his trademark in independent releases — which he also financed — such as *Return of the Secaucus Seven* and *Lianna*. Now, with *Baby It's You*, he has produced another terrific "Sayles" film, but this time with a studio gloss.

With somewhat more than his usual anemic but always well-spent budget, Sayles tells the story of a boy and girl who fall in love their senior year of high school, only to fall into their separate, inevitable futures afterward. Jill Rosen, the daughter of an upper-middle-class Jewish family, becomes enchanted by a macho, self-assured character who calls himself the Sheik. Jill is accepted by Sarah Lawrence



Rosanna Arquette as Jill and Vincent Spano as the Sheik in John Sayles' "Baby It's You," a realistic look at the problems of growing up in troubled times.

College while the Sheik quickly becomes a victim of his family's lower-class status. He leaves home for Miami so he can be near his idol, Frank Sinatra, and gets a dishwashing job in a restaurant that lets him lip-synch Sinatra records on the weekends.

Much of the movie's charm lies in its nostalgia. The conservatism of the '50s and the growing turbulence of the '60s are accurately yet subtly displayed. However, this accuracy if anything distances the film from the audience. It serves as a frame for the similarities of growing up in the '60s and today. Both Jill and the Sheik fear their unknown futures and the film explores their insecurities in a language so fresh it seems almost anachronistic.

There are more minute details that are

brought out, such as Jill's embarrassment of her parents when they help her move into her dorm. These touches contain a certain *deja vu* that indicates a universal adolescent experience behind the measured hemlines, the souped-up hot-rod, and then later batik shirts and frizzed-out hair.

Then there are some not-so-nostalgic events portrayed as well — Jill's drunken binge and the Sheik's departure from home — these rituals are still acted out today with the same desperate hunger for acceptance and the same clawing restlessness for independence. The appeal of *Baby It's You* lies not in its accurate depiction of a time in the past, but in the similarities of emotion that rest behind that time.

As usual, Sayles' presence is felt throughout the movie, so it is basically his

film. Rosanna Arquette, however, delivers a bravura performance in the difficult role of Jill. She admirably transforms her character from a clunky but wise school-girl into a woman who arrives on the threshold of her own awareness. Vincent Spano also does a good job as the Sheik, a loser only because of circumstances he cannot control.

The breathtaking cinematography by R.W. Fassbinder's longtime cameraman Michael Ballhaus suggests that pale pinks and blues are not solely attributable to Fassbinder's genius.

Baby It's You is a total triumph. College students from any time period can learn much from it about where they've been and what the future holds.

George Lucas returns to galaxy of soap operas

By DAVID SCHMIDT
Assistant Arts Editor

Gotterdammit, these insipid soap operas are already becoming mightier than Wagner's most apocalyptic operatic spectacles! By the end of 1984, only four things will have pre-empted the hallowed Summer Olympics in America: World War I, World War II, a Soviet invasion and *All My General Hospital Children With One*

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Life to Live. Yet soaps probably reached their universally popular peak this summer when at the movies I discovered they were first warped a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away.

While mastering the ABCs of movie-making, George Lucas obviously plagiarized that network when working late afternoons on *Return of the Jedi*. He discovered that soap doesn't necessarily leave a film but can become one itself. What he finally gave me was *Return of the Red-eye*, a soap-box soap opera where the suds don't shine — and neither do the stars.

General Hospital's ratings soared when Luke and Laura saved the world and the Ice Princess. Or was it Luke and Leia, a princess herself? No, that was *Star Wars*, when the dashing rogue Scorpio helped them blow up the Death Star. Sorry, I forgot Solo was that star in *Star Wars*. But which Death Star did he blow up in which movie? Now, had Dr. Rick Webber diagnosed Yoda's illness, I'm sure he could have miraculously saved the sage Muppet's life, but I doubt even Yoda could straighten out this mess.

The lord of the Dark Side was disappointingly impotent. He hissed, but so do old men with old dentures. Bolts of electricity flew from his fingertips, but I've seen more sparks leap from those of cookin' jazz pianists. After all, Luke withstood his power just by standing,

although I suppose his attempt at looking majestic had something to do with it. Even the droids were void of the charms which made them such perfect foibles in the previous two episodes. Call them *The Yawn and the Rustless*.

Astronomers here on Earth have plotted many stars since Darth Vader shed his sheel. Lucas couldn't even plot one. The situations involving his characters grew so thin by *Jedi* that they repeated themselves. Like all successful soaps, we could have missed an entire episode without actually missing anything at all. In fact, cut *Return of the Jedi* to 20 minutes, splice it to the end of *The Empire Strikes Back*, and Lucas would have an excellent series of two. Tolkien's tradition of trilogies would be shattered by a third, but then again J.R.R.

... a soap-box soap opera where the suds don't shine — and neither do the stars.

never met a high-tech special effect, and he got by without commemorative Burger King glasses.

When a useless bit of plot popped up like Luke's mysterious sister, it was time to lose all hope — even *Ryan's* — in creative storytelling. Gee, let me guess. Who is Luke's sister?

"It's Leia, isn't it?" Luke solemnly intoned.

Just as solemnly, Obi-Wan replied, "Your insides serve you well, Luke."

Well guys, my insides were ready to serve up something quite different. Surprise, surprise, Leia is the walk-away Skywalker. So what, and who cares? Did it ever matter? A more interesting revelation would be the identity of Luke's mother. I'd like to meet Mrs. Vader once. And once and for all, what will Lucas do next? Reports say his nine-part story will end early at three. Maybe it's time he moved on to another story, another time, *Another World*.

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