

ARTS and FEATURES

Williams' car salesman hysterics subdued in latest film offering

Cadillac Man
Robin Williams, Tim Robbins, Lori Petty, and Pamela Reed
Directed by Roger Donaldson
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Cadillac Man in one word: FRENETIC.

Well, not at first. The film starts out ludicrously, yet calmly—Joey O'Brien, a man who lives to sell cars, attempts to push his automobiles on a distraught widow before her late husband has even been interred.

Immediately thereafter, we meet Joey's girlfriends (Joy and Lila), his ex-wife, his co-workers, his bookie, his customers at the car lot (Turgeon Auto), the waitress from the Chinese restaurant at which he dines...in short, we meet the people who make up his life.

After several funny, touching scenes with these "significant others"—plus a few narrative asides from Joey (Robin Williams)—we are all set for a soft, sweet movie, sort of like Dead Poets Society (Williams' last film).

Forget it. Some strange upstart director, presumably after the youthful, action-oriented crowd, decided to incorporate the suspense element: A psychotically jealous husband, Larry (Tim Robbins), Larry, convinced that his wife (the receptionist at Turgeon Auto) is sleeping with the various salesmen, crashes into the showroom window with a machine gun, holding everyone hostage until he can figure out who's sleeping with his wife.

Ordinarily, the average film would have generated into a Lethal Weapon-esque melee of complete and total chaos; one would fear that shots from Robocop II might have been edited in by mistake.

Again—forget it. The atmosphere, once open and friendly, becomes tight—yet humor remains, perhaps more so than before. A human being, under extreme stress, does one of two things: dissolves into hysterics, or grins and bears it.

Williams takes the latter option. Believe it or not, the film is much more realistic because of this choice.

The ensuing one-on-one scenes be-

Beverley White Cinema

tween Williams and Robbins hover between humor and tension, never quite connecting with one option or the other. The audience witnesses a couple of attempted slayings, the injuring of a police officer and a spunky waitress preventing police from taking control of her restaurant ("No eat, no seat," she declares)—but nothing so dramatic as the private dialogues Williams and Robbins have.

All through these dialogues, Williams shows us something rather frightening:

Car salesmen double as psychologists—or, rather, brainwashers. Williams makes several "sales pitches," taking advantage of Robbins' vulnerable side: he doesn't want to hurt anyone. Not a soul. He'd rather kiss and make up with his wife.

One by one, Robbins is persuaded to let the hostages loose, until Williams is the only one remaining. To secure his own freedom, Williams makes his last pitch—the wrong one.

Even the most invincible, the most convincing salesman can make mistakes.



Cadillac Man Williams makes a point with Tim (Nuke Laloosh) Robbins

Again, such is life. While Cadillac Man is no Dead Poets Society—this is still a film that cannot be replicated—the talents of Robin Williams, coupled with the lack of artificial atmosphere (a welcome attribute

in a "hostage" comedy) leads us to believe that we are seeing real, flesh-and-blood people, in a life-threatening situation.

Until Williams tries to sell another car, that is.

Baby Flies captivate

The Baby Flies
A Colorful View
Resonance
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The second release by The Baby Flies, *A Colorful View*, is a captivating mix of sparse instrumentation, hook-filled melodies, and moody tempos. The band's sound falls somewhere between 10,000 Maniacs and Wednesday Week, with a dash of Cowboy Junkies thrown in for good measure.

Vocalist Pat Waters dominates *A Colorful View* with a delivery resembling that of Debbie Harry or Natalie Merchant. Chris Katris and chief songwriter Jim Waters paint the instrumental backdrop. Their self-produced, atmospheric mix features inventive drumming up front with guitar, keyboards and bass popping through.

The lead-off tune, "Let It Fall," is the album's best cut, weaving a flowing melody with an utterly seductive bassline. As the quiet verse changes to the solid 4/4 of the chorus, Waters relates the end of a relationship, singing, "I took your picture off my wall/Let it fall."

"Washing Over Me" is the album's hardest driving, most electric song with a fast tempo and powerful rhythm section. This contrasts with the title track which features dueling acoustic guitars by Waters and Katris.

"The Only One" juxtaposes jagged electric guitar with delicate acoustic sounds. The song is Blondie-esque, with a million-dollar chorus. Waters

Brian Springer Album

sings, "You think you're the only one/Who's ever been lonely/You think you're the only one alone... And it's sad/When you find you're not the only one."

"Give Me the Light" is another more aggressive track, with brittle guitar work, hard drumming and powerful bass. All hell breaks loose as Waters sings of a "Hand like steel/Too numb/Too numb to feel." *A Colorful View* needs more mood breakers like this, since it sometimes becomes overly hypnotic.

"Coming Back to Haunt You" is the song most resembling the 10,000 Maniacs sound, as it ebbs and flows in a dark mood. Waters approaches a whisper as she sings "Close your eyes/See the world in dark disguise."

While The Baby Flies trades musical excess for a sparse sound, at points the band is too successful, leaving tracks with a little too little of... everything. Fortunately, only three songs—"Chains," "Where the Creatures Call," and "Just the Beginning"—fall into this category, though nothing on the album is a throwaway.

Although *A Colorful View* has its flaws, it seems that the small Resonance label has yet another winner. When The Baby Flies clicks, the band displays irresistible charm.

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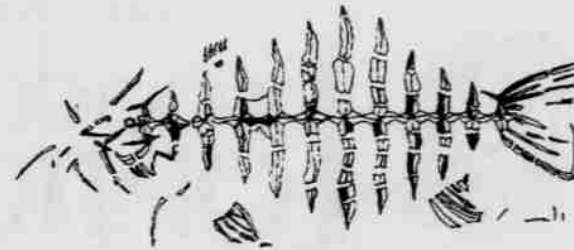
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