# Endearing British comedy celebrates life

#### Life Is Sweet

Alison Steadman, Jane Horrocks

directed by Mike Leigh

Chelsea 968-3005

ife Is Sweet is an affectionate, wide-eyed look into the lives of a lower-middle class family in England, a glimpse of the urban lifestyle that is shared by a healthy percentage of the British population. It is also a remarkable comedy, in that it is about funny-looking people who do and say funny things, but only in the most subtle sense of the term, and certainly not of the conventional sort of humor which American audiences have been conditioned to expect.

This endearing effort is undeniably cast in the traditional mold of the situation comedy, but with the sort of distinctly British feel that has become somewhat familiar to Americans over recent years. On the surface, at least, the central family of Life

#### NED DIRLIK

# Movie

Is Sweet is reminiscent of the Cockney stereotypes made famous by Monty Python — the characters that spoke with nearly incomprehensible accents and followed a diet that consisted of Spam, Spam and eggs and Spam casserole. British writer/director Mike Leigh's newest work is far removed from the hilariously raucous satire of that group, however; his is a vision of unglossed real life — slightly demented, perhaps, but still unflinchingly observant. When Leigh communicates this vision on the screen, he relies on one simple premise: Life may not necessarily be enjoyable, and it's certainly not easy, but it is always worthwhile - for the simple fact of what it means to be alive.

The film gently chronicles a few days in a blue-collar suburb of London, as experienced by its strikingly rich main characters. Andy (Jim Broadbent), for example, is the goodnatured, fairly lazy and unquestionably harmless father who hates his cooking job and dreams of selling various grilled foods around his neighborhood from a strange run-down

trailer/kitchen that, in better days, could have been a refreshment stand at the State Fair. His wife, Wendy, has a job selling baby's clothing but has no real time outside of her unenviable commitment to keeping peace within her turbulent family. The two twins, Natalie and Nicola, are as different as night and day: Natalie (Claire Skinner), who seems to be the only sane character in the film, provides a much-needed standard of rationality within the family, while Nicola (Jane Horrocks) is a mercilessly bratty hellion who crudely berates everyone around her with misdirected socialistic jargon and is consumed simultaneously by paranoid delusions of neglect and repulsive sexual fantasies that involve chocolate and stem from her bulimia.

As far as plot goes, the film basically consists of two storylines which develop and come to fruition over the course of the film. One is the process of maturation towards Nicola's eventual self-realization, a much-needed change finally inspired by a remarkable scene in which she and her mother open their hearts to each other. The other is the ill-fated restaurant venture of the goofy family friend Aubrey (played perfectly by Timothy Spall, who is one of the funnier-looking people to ever come



Wendy (r, Jane Horrocks) comforts her daughter Nicola (Alison Steadman)

out of England). Life Is Sweet relies little on plot in succeeding, however; the greater part of the film's structure is constructed entirely around the ways in which these people relate to each other, and around their constant bickering and mutual realization of the family's inherent absurdity. This is the reason that the film has received international acclaim (even making Gene Siskel's list of the top 5 movies of the year). The film begins and ends

with its characters, and never abandons them in favor of a tricky story or embarrassing situation.

What sets the film apart from others doesn't even have much to do with comedy. It's the honesty of its genuine approach, its almost innocent celebration of life which allows the characters to laugh at what happens around them and at themselves. Rarely has a film so easily justified its title as Life Is Sweet.

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# 'Wayne's World' tender, moving film ... not!

### Wayne's World

Mike Myers, Dana Carvey, Rob Lowe

directed by Penelope Spheeris

Ram Triple 967-8284

ayne's World is the best movie I've ever seen. I want everyone to see it. As a matter of fact, I'm sitting in Sera-Tec Biologicals donating every ounce of plasma I've got to raise enough money

Biologicals donating every ounce of plasma I've got to raise enough money to buy every person on campus a ticket....

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NOT!!!!

MIKE LONG

# Movie

No film in recent memory has been more disappointing than the highly anticipated Wayne's World. I had feared that the amiable Wayne and Garth would be dropped in the middle of a huge plot they couldn't handle, similar to The Blues Brothers or the MacKenzie Brothers in Strange Brew. Instead, they end up in a plotless film that seems to go on forever.

In case you are unfamiliar with this pair from Sanarday Night Live, Wayne (Mike Myers) and Garth (Dana Carvey) are two metal-head teenagers who live in Aurora, Illinois. They have their own local cable-access show, called "Wayne's World" which is broadcast from Wayne's basement. The show basically consists of Wayne and Garth exchanging quips in dude speak and interviewing people from the neighborhood.

The film begins with sleazy producer Benjamin (Rob Lowe) catching an episode of "Wayne's World." He decides that the show would be perfect to buy and exploit. Meanwhile, Wayne and Garth cruise their favorite hangouts (a heavy metal bar and a donut shop) and revel in teenage life. Wayne meets Cassandra (Tia Cartere) and immediately falls in love with her. Benjamin convinces the owner of "Noah's Arcades" (Brian Doyle Murray) to purchase "Wayne's World" and use it for advertising. The pair cheat Wayne and Garth out

of their show and Wayne loses Cassandra. Our young heroes must now fight to get the things that they love back.

Well, that's the plot. It can be summed up as: Boy has show. Boy has show and girl. Boy loses show and girl. Boy hurls. Boy gets show and girl back. Not real hard to follow. This is truly a shame. When characters that are usually only allotted 5-10 minutes are given an hour and a half, they should at least expand on the characters. I was hoping to learn who Wayne and Garth are, why do they have a show, how did they get it, and why does Wayne still live with his parents. Instead, all we learn is that Garth is an introvert and extremely shy.

Most disappointing of all, the movie is not funny. The opening sequence in which Wayne and Garth and friends perform Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" while cruising in a souped-up Pacer is truly hilarious, but the film goes straight downhill from there. Wayne and Garth looking into the camera and saying cute things gets old really fast. Some of the references are far too obscure to be funny. Those that aren't are far too predictable to be funny. There are 4 or 5 laughs, but that doesn't constitute a successful comedy in my book.

Myers and Carvey are impressive in their roles. They both have little quirks to show that they really care about the parts they are playing. Wayne always tucks his hair behind his ears in promising situations and Garth talks out of the side of his mouth, due to his shyness. Carvey steals the film with a fantasy perfor-

mance of Hendrix's "Foxy Lady." Rob Lowe is perfect as the sleazy promoter. He slimes his way across the screen in true pedophile style.

A lot of the blame for the film's blatant badness can be blamed on director Penelope Spheeris (The Decline of Western Civilization, Part 2, Suburbia, Dudes), who does not try to hide her worship for heavy metal guys. She makes every long haired male in the film a god and every female a poorly dressed floozy. Even Cassandra, who is portrayed as a headstrong woman, must rely on Wayne to save her from Benjamin.

The thing about Wayne's World

The thing about Wayne's World that really gets me is the fact that it could have been so much more. There are several scenes in which the film makes some excellent points on what suburban teenage life is like. These are intelligent kids who have grown up with TV and computers and who have too much time on their hands. If the film could have studied what Wayne and Garth were really like as people, instead of trying its hardest to make us laugh, it would have improved the film vastly. I wasn't expecting to see Slacker 2, but if a movie isn't going to be entertaining, it should at least try to make a point.

### THE RATINGS

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