

Circle of Friends a must see for college students

Movie Review

By Deanna Lemond

There are few movies out these days as complex and entertaining as Pat O'Connor's *Circle of Friends*, just released on video cassette. O'Connor has taken on issues like abortion, religion, death of family members, impossible parental expectations, and unwanted marriages, all the while making us laugh at four college freshmen stumbling upon adulthood.

The story centers around three childhood friends—Benny, Eve, and Nan—and their reunion in college. (Nan's family moved to Dublin years before.) For Benny and Eve, Dublin is worlds away from their small Irish town of Notglan and so are the choices and emotions that college brings them. All three girls learn to deal with love. Benny and her boyfriend also have to deal with parents who haven't quite accepted that their children can think for themselves. The story lines are common, but powerfully presented in a way that only makes you want more.

The characters of this film are in-

credibly strong and likable. Benny, played by Minnie Driver, is the strong-willed romantic whom the audience feels compelled to throughout the film. She is rather plain, but she still gets the sensitive, "blue-eyed boy", Jack, played by Chris O'Donnell, and we watch them fall in love on screen. But when Benny's best friend seduces her boyfriend while Benny is preoccupied with her father's death, she knows how strong a confused teenager can be.

Nan Mahan, played by Saffron Burrows, is the spoiled beauty who looks like a film star and sets her sights on a wealthy, older man. She finds herself pregnant and unable to get an abortion because she is Catholic, so she does the only thing she can do: she traps herself a husband (who is quite in love with Benny). Nan is not exactly the villain of the movie, though. We pity her for trying to escape an abusive family situ-

ation the only way she knows how, though we hate her for her conniving.

Eve Malone, played by Geraldine O'Rawe, is the moderation between the extremes of her two friends. She grew up in a convent after her parents died, and she is continuously the voice of reason in the film. However, she is by no means immune to the confusion that college brings.

Though the movie deals with heavy subjects, it has an amazing ability to make us laugh at life and at ourselves. Catholicism, sexuality, and guilt seem quite funny juxtaposed as they are in the movie. In the girls' village their priest is drilling them to make their bodies "gardens for Jesus" while at Dublin University they sit in a required class called "The Sexual Lives of Savages," learning how happy the South Pacific Islanders are having no social regulations on sex. Another continu-

ous source of humor is the characters' candid conversations about sex, like when Benny says that sex "seems ridiculous, really, like someone sticking their finger up your nose" or Eve's comment that it is her boyfriend's job to try to seduce her and her job to try to stop him. But what really makes the film worth laughing at is Alan Cumming's character Sean Walsh, who looks like a cross between Adolf Hitler and a salamander. He weasels his way into the business and affections of Benny's father, and he expects to be Benny's husband. He invades the audience's affection, too, by being a character that everyone loves to hate!

All college students can find something in *Circle of Friends* that makes them smile at their own recent growing pains. And everyone who watches it will enjoy being taken back to the first time they fell in love, the first time they weren't under their parents' watchful eyes, and their first thoughts on sex. This is a movie that everyone can enjoy and learn from.

Reentry

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Amedeo's, "when you had money," and T. K. Tripps in Ridgewood Shopping Center.

Convocations were required, but chapel was not. Meals were no longer served family style. Phones were allowed in the rooms, but most people chose not to have one. Students still dressed up for football games; however, Saturday classes were a thing of the past. Boyfriends were allowed to come to Sunday lunch in the cafeteria, and the other students always checked out the guys. Shrimp Creole was served every Sunday; Garrison still wonders why it always had to be shrimp Creole!

During exams, the cafeteria staff would put out trays of food late at night. Students could go to the cafeteria, fill up a tray, and take it back to their rooms. Dr. Weems was president - then and now! Only seniors were allowed to have cars on campus. There was no mandatory church attendance.

Garrison laughingly remembered the visit Gerald Ford's son made to campus; all the girls were crazy about him!

An 8 AM class with Dr. Knight in the English department rated as quite a memory for Garrison, too. It seems that if Dr. Knight saw a student yawn, that student was immediately called on to answer a question. Garrison was not willing to estimate how many times this happened to her!

The decision to come back to Meredith is one she has never regretted. Garrison loves being on the Meredith campus because it allows the opportunity to be "fulfilled intellectually." The opportunity to discuss and express ideas is uniquely satisfying. The Meredith campus is a "safe" place for reentries according to Garrison. Though it is a lot of work, it has been worthwhile.

Suzan Tripp was a commuter student in the early '80's. She describes her situation as, "marriage, mortgage and Meredith." She left as a sopho-

more. Her need to leave came in the middle of one of Dr. Knight's lectures during a British authors class when she knew she couldn't "do it all." Even then, she knew she would finish her education.

Tripp worked full time for 9 years, returned to school for 2 years, and had twins in 1989. She returned to Meredith in 1992 and is majoring in business administration. The welcoming environment at Meredith contributed to her decision to come back. She particularly appreciates the changes in the English department and feels that there is more caring shown to students now. She does give credit for being a better writer to her days in the Meredith English department. What were her concerns about reentering? Tripp is quick to say, "Could I measure up?" When asked if she thought she had measured up, her smiling answer was, "Absolutely!" Tripp feels that getting her degree is the most challenging thing she has ever done - and the most rewarding.

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