

## A Life Less Ordinary is less ordinary

TORY HOKE  
Features Editor

A *Life Less Ordinary* is what *Excess Baggage* was supposed to be: a psychotic romantic comedy about an unwilling kidnapper and a take-charge kidnappee. I suppose all *Excess Baggage* needed was divine intervention; *A Life Less Ordinary* has it in spades.

My God, this movie is funny. You've seen the silly premises before, like a take-charge kidnapper, matchmaking angels, and self-cleaning clothes and self-styling hair, but director Danny Boyle's takes on these conceits, however fresh, are just accessories to the innovative, genuinely funny conflict at the heart of this movie: Hollywood fantasy versus stark reality.

Every laugh (and there are plenty) comes from either a normal character's reaction to a ridiculous situation or a ridiculous character's reaction to a normal situation. When Ewan McGregor's Robert storms the office of the man who laid him off, you wonder where security is until six or seven security guards dogpile him from behind. When Robert and Cameron

Diaz's Celine finally have their first kiss, it's all very sunny and romantic until they separate and you see a string of saliva connecting their mouths too obvious to be accidental.

The best feature of this movie is that for every Hollywood stereotype there's a character played against type; for the clichés of the evil corporate

best I've ever seen him, Diaz is appropriately snotty but winning, and Hunter is intense and Lindo is ineffectual as he and Hunter each play the role you expect the other to have. Tony Shalhoub (*Big Night*, and, curse his agent, *Men In Black*), best known as Tony from the TV series *Wings*, has a brief but gut-bustingly funny part as the guy who gives Robert his romantic wake-up call.

There seem to be scads of inside jokes in this flick. Delroy Lindo's briefly butterfly-bandaged nose hearkens to *Get Shorty* co-star Dennis Farina's. Holly Hunter's wounded arm and lingering rain scene hearken to those of *The Piano*. Ewan McGregor's recuperation on the couch after a leg injury and his shallow grave hearken to, of course, *Shallow Grave*, and Diaz advises him so carefully to look to his "dark side" that you know she's talking about his role as Ben Kenobi in the coming *Star Wars* prequel. The in-jokes aren't the feature players in *A Life Less Ordinary*, but they help make the movie an unpredictable ocean of funny that pleases and pleases and pleases.

### Movie Review

daddy, Diaz's poor little rich girl, and McGregor's blue-collar loser, there are the intelligent, friendly hill hermits, the tiny, ultraviolent angel O'Reilly (Holly Hunter, bounding from accent to accent), and her burly, subdued fellow angel Jackson (Delroy Lindo). The film keeps you guessing whether its going to stabilize or explode until the end, when—and I'm going to give away the ending here—it doesn't.

All my favorite actors are here, from Hunter and McGregor to Dan Hedaya (*Clueless*, *First Wives' Club*) as Gabriel, Chief of Angels, and the whole cast is ideal. McGregor is the

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# CHAT at lunch

Challenges  
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Awareness  
Transitions

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2nd floor  
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Tuesdays  
11:30-12:30

Questions?  
Call Jo Ann Thomas  
MCA WINGS Representative

## Saddle up to El Rodeo

BROOKE BANSON  
Staff Reporter

Hola! Bienvenido a El rodeo! El Rodeo, a popular Mexican restaurant on Hillsborough Street, serves adequate food with fast, friendly service and offers affordable prices. On a four-star

scale, El Rodeo receives an average two and a half stars. For Meredith students, the restaurant is conveniently located within driving distance. Across the street from NC State, it offers Meredith girls the chance to meet new people (aka men) during the meal. This location is definitely a plus!

The waiters, who are fun guys, chat easily with their customers and bring out the food within minutes. They return frequently to check on their customers and seem to enjoy serving them.

So if El Rodeo's location and service are great, then what is the problem? The answer—the food. I was disappointed. I visited El Rodeo with 10 of my friends, and almost everyone complained about something. I enjoyed my Spanish rice, and I sampled some

other dishes. I tried the cheese enchilada, and I liked it. However, my corn tortilla was extremely soggy and bland, and the fried ice cream, normally my main purpose for eating at a Mexican restaurant, was not up to standards.

Don't get me wrong—I'm not pronouncing El Rodeo a bad place to eat. It has a festive atmosphere, and the prices are very affordable, especially for college students. I just know what to order on my next trip.

### Restaurant Review

### Learn about self-protection

At 1 - 4 pm on Saturday, November 1, Meredith is sponsoring a SafeSkills Workshop for up to 30 students. Please reserve your space in the workshop as soon as possible by calling the Dean of Students Office at 829-8521.

Why should I sign up? The training provides accurate information about assault and instruction in the use of effective physical self-protection strategies and techniques in a safe environment.

The program is a part of Rape Awareness Week. The SafeSkills Workshop is funded by the Creative Ideas Fund of Meredith College. Questions? Call Sharon Cannon at 829-8521.