

Don't come out for *Bringing Out the Dead*

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Guest Writer

If you are looking to see a new drama, *Bringing Out the Dead* is not the film to choose. This film has a great cast and a fabulous soundtrack, but that is all it has. Unfortunately, it is lacking a plot and any character development.

The movie centers around Frank Pierce (Nicholas Cage) who is an EMS paramedic in New York City in the early 1990's. It follows Pierce through two days and three nights of his troubled life.

Bringing Out The Dead opens with Pierce and his partner (John Goodman) speeding through the night on the way to the next call. What Pierce does not realize is that this call will change his life. When they answer a call about a man in cardiac arrest, they arrive on the scene to find an unconscious man and his hysterical

family. It is here that he meets Mary Burke (Patricia Arquette), his patient's daughter. Pierce brings the man back to life, though he stays in a coma throughout the movie. Pierce and Burke form a bond as he goes to and from the hospital, and she is there for her father.

The audience hears a voice-over of Pierce's thoughts, which explain the past months of his life. This monologue returns several times throughout the story, giving viewers a glimpse into how troubled Pierce really is. He is hopeless in his life because of the strain his job puts on him. He sees dying people every night and can only deal with the stress through alcohol. He sleeps and eats very little, but he smokes and drinks excessively.

One of the stranger aspects of the film is a recurring hallucination Pierce has. Throughout the movie, he sees the face of a teenage Latino named Rose.

She was a runaway whom he failed to save one night. For reasons never explained, she haunts him continually through the movie. He also hears her voice and imagines her talking to him. She seems to be at the root of his emotional problems.

Bringing Out the Dead has very few high points, but the one part of the movie that is enjoyable is the humor. It is sprinkled throughout the film and makes what would otherwise have been an unbearable experience at least semi-bearable. If not for the funny lines, I would not have made it through the movie.

Cage and Arquette give satisfactory performances in the film, but this is not the couple at their best. The chemistry between them is good, but it should be a lot better considering their real-life marriage. I have seen them both in roles that I consider much more

impressive, such as Cage in *Face/Off* and Arquette in *Stigmata*.

Bringing Out the Dead did neither of these talented actors any justice. Their characters were underdeveloped, probably due to the lack of plot. While both looked terrible, the make-up artists really outdid themselves on Cage. During the whole film he looked like a corpse himself. The film did little to show off the talent of this couple, which is a shame because they both have so much potential.

For those who are going to see this film because they are Martin Scorsese fans, be prepared. This is no *Goodfellas* or *Casino*.

This movie is more of a strange head-trip. There is much use of flashing lights and fast-forwarding effects while Cage is driving the ambulance. Truthfully, it almost made me car-

sick. In the middle of the movie there is a very odd sequence inside the head of Pierce while he is drugged. While it goes with the rest of the movie, it seemed pointless and useless to the story line. It would not have adversely affected the movie if the whole sequence had ended up on the cutting room floor.

All in all, *Bringing Out the Dead* was a big disappointment and a waste of money. It is depressing and sad, with few bright spots. I left the movie broken and frustrated with a feeling that the world is hopeless and altogether miserable.

This film does make you think about life but only to hope that yours is never as depressing as the ones portrayed in it. Unless you enjoy movies that are unhappy, dark and have little plot, I highly suggest that you buy your ticket for a different movie.

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