

Tomorrow is not always a day away in Punxsutawney

Groundhog Day

Bill Murray, Andie MacDowell, Chris Elliot

directed by Harold Ramis

Willowdale, South Square, Ram Triple
477-4681, 493-3502, 967-8284

To begin, I have to ask one question. Does anyone pay attention to Groundhog Day? We all know the myth, right? With all the technology we have today to predict the weather (and the Farmer's Almanac), a groundhog seeing his shadow holds little importance with anyone.

In *Groundhog Day*, Bill Murray's character, Phil Conners, is a TV weatherman dissatisfied with his job, the people around him and life in general. Co-starring Andie MacDowell and directed by "Ghostbuster" pal Harold Ramis, this comedy uses frantic hilarity spearheaded by Murray to take a good look at the importance of life and how we should make the most of it.

The movie centers around Phil, who reluctantly journeys to Punxsutawney, Penn., to cover the town's annual Groundhog Day festival. Accompanied by Rita, his station's new producer (Andie MacDowell) and Larry, the cameraman (Chris Elliot), Murray is con-

movie

ANDREW CROOK

demned to relive Groundhog Day until he gets it right. Through the next two hours what we see is a series of identical scenes where Murray tries and tries again to make his life a little more meaningful. Whether it's helping out a bum on the street, greeting an overzealous and quite disturbed high school buddy or making the move on the beautiful producer, Phil can't straighten himself out.

He eventually becomes so frustrated at his eternal encasement on Groundhog Day that he makes several attempts to commit suicide. The range of methods he tries makes for the funniest moments in the picture, but reliving the same day he never dies, repeatedly waking up to Sonny and Cher's "I Got You, Babe" (Enough to make any man want to kill himself). Phil finally finds reason to live as he repeatedly woos his producer, Rita, which serves as the driving force behind the movie.

The success of *Groundhog Day* lies mainly in the lap of the superb performance of Bill Murray. Phil Conners is just an average Joe who has the same problems as everyone else. Hating his life, he uses arrogance and cynicism to put down anyone around him who actually enjoys who they are or what they

do. As Phil relives Groundhog Day, Murray uses his dry humor to make his gloomy character's impossible predicament repeatedly funny. Murray's body language and facial expressions are constantly amusing and his pickup lines are always fresh, stemming from his bad choice of words in previous scenes. Murray grips us with his comedy and allows us to enjoy the ride.

Andie MacDowell also turns in a strong performance as the over-enthusiastic producer who catches Phil's eye the first time he meets her. MacDowell's character contrasts nicely with Murray's as she intuitively and coolly dodges all of Phil's advances. Just when you think she will succumb to Phil's "sexual prowess" she casts him aside, declaring that he is too shrewd or she isn't ready for a relationship.

MacDowell is a very interesting actress in that she is able to look sweet and sexy at the same time. There are times in the picture where MacDowell is annoyingly "too sweet" which not only frustrates Phil but the audience as well. Overall, however, MacDowell gives Rita a certain charm and vulnerability that would make any man fall in love with her.

The directing of Harold Ramis and the screenplay of he and Danny Rubben give structure and imagination to a film that borderlines chaos. The screenplay is extremely original and packed full of well-written scenes. Because Phil's day



Andie MacDowell and Bill Murray admire Chris Elliot's tobaggan

occurs over and over again we have to see the same scenes continuously. If done sloppily this could be a VERY BORING movie. But Rubben and Ramis give their characters plenty of interesting dialogue and diversity, and Ramis' direction gives structure and balance to the film. Not only does he provide a colorful and enlightening story about the value of life and the people in it, but he successfully controls a movie that desperately wants to run out of control.

There are a few inconsistencies in the film, such as the lack of explanation as to how Phil Conners is forced to

relive the same day. But Ramis' direction is commendable; he is a promising comedic director.

Why call it "Groundhog Day"? In essence Phil is the groundhog in this film. Conners is a man who constantly sees his shadow every day. It is not until he looks at the goodness of living and helping others that he no longer sees his shadow, allowing him to enter the spring of his life.

Even though it is a little difficult to find through all of Murray's craziness, the meaning does shine and makes us leave the theater with hope that spring and rebirth are just around the corner.

Diversity is key to smart, sassy neo-Cosby show

Where I Live

Doug E. Doug, Loraine Toussaint, Sullivan Walker

Friday, 9:30 p.m.
ABC (WTVD Channel 11)

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Do you miss *The Cosby Show*? Are you experiencing a belated *Good Times* withdrawal? If so, you'll want to tune in ABC's *Where I Live*, a clever new sitcom showcasing the hijinks of funnyman Doug E. Doug.

Blessed with smart scripts, lightning pace and incredible actor chemistry, *Where I Live* easily separates itself from its lackluster TGF siblings.

Consider a recent episode in which Doug and his mother engage in a war of words reminiscent of the verbal brawls between *Cosby's* Claire and Theo Huxtable. The culprit? Doug's new CD from The Plain Brown Rapper. It seems as though dear ol' Mom isn't too crazy about the CD's explicit lyrics.

Here's a sample: "If your mother's on your case and she's always in your face, kill your mother. If she makes you clean your room, gotta send her to her tomb. Kill your mother."

When Doug continues to listen to his CD via headphones, his mother catches him off guard, snatches the CD

television

ROB BRITAIN

out of his boombox and tosses it into traffic.

Needless to say, Doug's not too happy that his mom made a frisbee out of his new CD. And in true sitcom fashion, he promptly voices his complaint to his father, James.

But just like Heathcliff Huxtable, James St. Martin refuses to side with either of his familial warriors. So, despite Doug's impassioned freedom of speech soliloquy, his father explains, "Expression is only for those who pay the bills." And after Doug labels his dad's logic as "messed up," the elder St. Martin quips, "Then pay a bill."

Although *Where I Live's* writing is certainly as funny and as intelligent as

that of *Cosby*, Doug E. Doug's new ABC series is far from being a *Cosby* clone. Because unlike its predecessor, *Where I Live* is a series as much about its Harlem setting as its family of origin.

Unlike *Family Matters'* drab, cardboardish exterior sets, *Where I Live's* outside sets exude pulsating life and grit. Obviously, television realism has

come a long way since those rose-colored, *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*-esque stoop scenes in 227.

During a season when black characters have been relegated to predominantly token roles on hit series, TV viewers have been given the opportunity to prove both the power and the need of smart, sassy all-black programs.

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7:30 • 9:45 nightly (PG-13)
2:30 • 4:45 Sat/Sun

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2:00 • 4:00 Sat/Sun

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2:00 • 4:30 Sat/Sun

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one woman's fluff is another woman's fire. -omni

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FALLING DOWN 3:10 • 5:10 • 7:20 • 9:30

FIRE IN THE SKY 3:15 • 5:15 • 7:15 • 9:15

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