

# 'Gossip' Doesn't Provide Much to Talk About

By JUSTIN WINTERS  
Staff Writer

With the newest teen flick "Gossip" infecting theaters, parents might start to believe several false things about their college-age children.

First, they live in abundantly adorned and spacious "pads." Second, everyone who attempts to make it past high school to a higher education institute is super-attractive with a keen sense of fashion.

And last of all, the young adults that inhabit the so-called life of the pretty but vacuous "Gossip" accurately portray the everyday life of a college student.

This "Gossip," in simplest terms, is not worth writing home about.

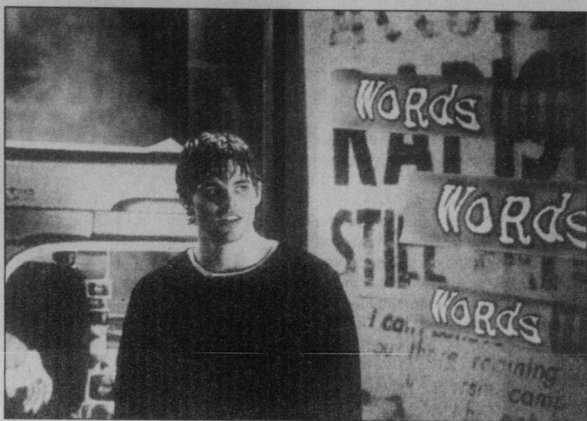
The story, which is interesting but unbelievable, revolves around a trio of college students with entirely too much free time. They include the rich boy (James Marsden of "Disturbing Behavior"), the artistic loner (Norman Reedus of "8MM"), and the pouty über-model (Lena Headey of TV's "Merlin").

The trio, influenced by an assignment by their oh-so-suave communications professor, decide to start a rumor about a tryst between two other students that never really happened. And shazam!, the pure gossip suddenly spawns a trail of lies and murder that sends the original sources of the rumor in a tailspin.

In his first feature, director Davis Guggenheim (who directed an episode of "ER" back in 1996) does pull some movie magic by employing some dazzling camera work that hides a script filled with hot air. His vision for the film, a hybrid of last year's "Cruel Intentions" and "The Blair Witch Project," keys into the college age a longing for anything MTV-ish (i.e. very fast).

Likewise, all the actors and actresses do a good job of spouting off mindless babble while blending in with the pretty surroundings. The flashy settings, which include the trio's lush million-dollar apartment and a funky nightclub that could be the rich stepister of Chapel Hill's Players, employ vibrant colors that will nab the film's cinematographer many job offers in the future.

Too bad the audience can never truly be drawn into the turmoil of the plot, because there is not a single character



James Marsden stars in "Gossip," a flashy but no-substance film about a rumor that spirals out of control.

worthy of sympathy. Every main character has major character flaws that would make any conscientious college student tell his or her mom, "College is, like, not that way that at all, but can I borrow some money?"

So, let the truth be told, the word on

"Gossip" is neither very good nor very bad. Ironically, it's not even worth talking about.

But you didn't hear it from me.

The Arts & Entertainment Editor can be reached at artsdesk@unc.edu.

# Underwater War Thriller Fills Screen With Suspense

By DAVE POVILL  
Staff Writer

All right. Let's get the stupid submarine puns over and done with first. "U-571" never "dives deep" into a storyline, but still manages to "torpedo" enough claustrophobic, nail-biting action to "surface" as a top-notch war flick.

Director Jonathan Mastow

takes a little bit from every submarine film ever made, adds some new twists and

cranks up the action to turn out a movie so suspenseful you'll hardly even realize that you've seen it 10 times before.

It's the classic "good Americans vs. evil Nazis" war story, but the mission is slightly more devious than usual.

They doctor up an American sub, the S-33, to look like a Nazi supply sub, and head out to rendezvous with U-571, a German U-boat awaiting aid. Once on board, they will take an encryption device called "The Enigma," sink the ship and beat the Nazis! Hooray!

Of course, the plan goes awry, and Lt. Tyler (Matthew McConaughey) finds himself commanding his crew aboard the battered U-boat. What a perfect chance for him to prove to himself and others that he really is ready to command his own ship, a wish that he was earlier denied by Lt. Commander Dahlgren (Bill Paxton) because he wasn't ready to lead without hesitation.

The only problem with this part of the plot is that we never get a chance to

see Lt. Tyler's flaws, nor do we see how he overcomes them. Similarly, details are mentioned but never developed, and minor characters are your garden-variety war-movie caricatures, complete with the weathered veteran, the loose cannon and the scared rookie.

Once on the U-boat, the American crew faces every problem imaginable but still manages to come out on top, of course, because they're the good guys. Never mind the fact that they don't have enough power to creep along at anything faster than a snail's pace, have less ammunition than the typical high-schooler and are "getting crapped on" constantly by depth charges that all but rip the boat into shreds.

All of this might make you stop and think about the implausibility of the movie, if Mastow ever gave you a chance to stop and think. Masterfully orchestrating disaster upon disaster, Mastow keeps you so busy gripping your armrest in absolute silence that you never have time to question any of it.

And to be sure, silence is greatly appreciated when watching this movie, as the sound puts you directly alongside the characters in their rickety Nazi craft. Each groan of bending steel, each blast of a depth charge and even each sonar ping resonates with absolute clarity to scare the crap out of you.

In summary, although the characters are a tad shallow and the story a bit predictable, "U-571" is so jam-packed with edge-of-your-seat suspense that it will surely blow you out of the water (sorry).

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# Film Focuses Too Much on Love, Not Enough on Basketball

By FERRIS MORRISON  
Staff Writer

If all's fair in "Love & Basketball," then why do women fall for losers in love and have such a tough time proving themselves in the game?

Produced by Spike Lee, "Love & Basketball" tells the story of two ball players who dream of a future in the NBA — and with each other. The film is cleverly laid out in four quarters, by dividing the character's lives by their basketball careers in childhood, high school, college and professional ball.

Sanaa Lathan stars as Monica Wright, a tough girl who wants to be the first woman to play in the NBA. Despite her mother's wishes for a more demure daughter, she pursues a basketball career by earning a scholarship to the University of Southern California.

From the day she moves in next

door, Monica begins her love-hate relationship with Quincy McCall, played by Omar Epps. Epps does an excellent job portraying the typical male basketball player who lets the red carpet treatment go to his head and his groin.

Screenwriter and director Gina Prince-Bythewood created a story about two strong ball players, but by entangling them in romance, she weakened Monica's character and made Quincy seem like a player. Despite Quincy's Casanova behavior, Monica can't seem to let him go.

Even though he is almost as passionate about basketball as she is, Quincy expects Monica to be there for him when he needs her, even if it interferes with her career.

Putting the love story aside, the film's focus on basketball takes the audience into a world of competition and inside the mind of a player. Prince-Bythewood's use of closeups and quick pans brings the audience inside the action of a basketball game from the perspective of a player.

Bythewood's emphasis on women's

basketball highlights talents in an industry where women are not as recognized as they should be.

While Monica plays the championship game in high school, Bythewood takes the audience inside her mind and they are able to see what Monica sees as the camera darts back and forth toward the basket. Voice-over during this scene allows the audience to hear Monica's thoughts as she plays the game.

Bythewood also shows how women's emotions are restricted in basketball as they are forced to be "ladylike." But for a girl like Monica who is uncomfortable

with her own femininity, it's difficult to lower her intensity and bad attitude during games.

While all does turn out well in the love story between Monica and Quincy, Bythewood would have made a better film if she had left that aspect of "Love & Basketball" as a subplot.

Instead, she should have focused on the struggle of women in basketball and the red carpet treatment men receive in the same industry.

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