

Been There, Done That for Bad 'Loser' Implausible Plot, Good Effects Fill Limp 'Lies'

ARIADNE GUTHRIE
Staff Writer

At some point in high school, every person met someone who was trying so hard to be cool that it was painful. Losers were the people you desperately wanted to make fun of, but you just couldn't stop pitying long enough to get a good one-liner out.

However, the "Loser" currently embarrassing itself in theaters is bad enough to put pity aside. After an hour and a half of tired jokes, bad slapstick and sappy romance, it's clear that this new movie is aptly named.

The writers of "Loser," who obviously needed to do some more research on their subjects, were trying to ride the prosperous wave of high school romantic comedies such as "Can't Hardly Wait" and "American Pie" while simultaneously allowing the new stars to 'grow up' a little by placing them smack-dab in the modern mecca of maturity: college.

Jason Biggs, who will forever be remembered for his tryst with a tasty tart in "American Pie," plays Paul, a small-town kid trying too hard to fit into the trendy society of NYU. Tormented by his hip roommates and ignored by everyone else, Paul eventually finds friendship, and love, of course, with another troubled soul.

Dora (Mena Suvari of "American Beauty") is a perfect cross between Brittany Spears and one of "The Craft" ladies, a melancholy girl who drops the



Jason Biggs and Mena Suvari star with Greg Kinnear in the forgettable new teen flick "Loser." The haphazard mix of sappy romance and tired, overused comedy fail to make this movie watchable, even for teenagers.

attitude and her affair with her manipulative English professor, to be with Paul.

The real problem with "Loser" is that it's been done before, and it was done better. Paul's struggle for acceptance in the movie is a re-telling of Drew Barrymore's film "Never Been Kissed." Since the stories in both films are practically identical, "Loser" had already lost points for being too predictable.

Its cast, too, turns in a disappointing performance. Paul's roommates, a hip trio of N'Sync look-alikes, are never quite cruel, shallow or conniving enough to really humiliate anyone

except themselves. One scene, which involves their experimentation with a date rape drug, should have been left on the cutting room floor.

Greg Kinnear, who was excellent in his role in "As Good As It Gets," is flat and forgettable as the English professor, and Suvari's role is so limited to merely looking cute that she, too, is unfortunately unmemorable.

Biggs, who also was the best part of this summer's other lackluster college flick "Boys and Girls," is the movie's saving grace. His portrayal of the nice guy who finishes last is right on target,

funny, and only mildly bogged down by bad scripting. Although forced to deliver some terrible lines, Biggs is charming enough that it becomes almost forgivable.

So, when the people beside you in the theater fall asleep during a movie they've paid six bucks to see, it's a bad sign. When you leave the theater crying and you paid to see a comedy, it becomes official.

You've just seen a "Loser."

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

KIT FOSS
Staff Writer

Due to its reliance on hackneyed scary movie techniques, Director Robert Zemeckis' ("Forest Gump") psychological thriller "What Lies Beneath" starts out well but falls short of greatness.

Michelle Pfeiffer ("The Story of Us") plays Claire Spencer, a lonely and fragile housewife who is consumed by the eccentric actions of a

spirit intent on revenging her husband, Norman Spencer (Harrison Ford of "Random Hearts"). Her life is the epitome of a transitional phase due to her new house, recent car accident and departure of her only daughter to college.

Naturally, her cold, geneticist husband assumes these elements could easily drive his gal into the loopy state of believing a ghost is tinkering with the radio, computer, bathtub and front door. Playing outside his usual role of the good guy, Ford's character refuses to take his wife's reports of experiencing "the presence" of a ghost seriously.

Considerable tribute to Hitchcock appears in the red herring presented by parallels between Michelle Pfeiffer's character and her lovelorn next door neighbor. "Beneath" acknowledges the famous shower scene of Hitchcock's "Psycho" when Pfeiffer rips down the shower curtain as she attempts to flee

from the bad guy. The film also borrows from the voyeuristic qualities of "Rear Window" in its usage of Pfeiffer spying on her next door neighbor, who unexpectedly spies back.

The visual effects of "Beneath" are the redeeming quality of the film - simple, yet unforgettable. The lack of light in the film creates a classic horror movie aura. Again, the film pays homage to the techniques of Hitchcock: mirrors, glass, windows, and reflections in water play up the spirit's appearances, but after a while the audience tires of anticipating the image of a ghost in these surfaces.

Zemeckis, who is known for his special effects work in his films such as "Gump" and "Back to the Future," could have spent more time developing some of the hole-filled storyline rather than the many attempts to scare.

The plot of "Beneath" is riddled with serious credibility issues. It's extremely murky what any woman would see in Ford's character's overall lack of support and charm. The kicker is when the oh-so-brilliant heroine stops driving her vehicle to call the police in the midst of a chase scene. Doesn't she realize how stupid this is considering the fact that she's in a horror movie and the bad guy is (predictably) right behind her?

I'll try to suspend my disbelief and not spoil the lackluster plot by revealing what happens next, but if you've seen the trailers for this movie, you've basically seen what (doesn't) lie beneath.

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

Everclear Learns To Smile Big

The usually cynical Everclear teaches all rockers to "don't worry, be happy" on their new album of so-so *Songs*

KAREN WHICHARD
Staff Writer

The good life has become a reality for the band members of Everclear, if the lyrics of their new album *Songs From an American Movie Vol. One: Learning How to Smile* are to be believed.

Songs is the fourth album for the trio, and the group has traded their traditionally cynical themes for a lighter message celebrating family life and the fruits of success.

The new album features several tributes to vocalist and guitar player Art Alexakis' young daughter, including "Annabella's Song." The last track on the album is a contemplative piece that moves majestically and utilizes a string section fused with the band's own



instrumentation fairly successfully.

The worst song on *Songs* is Everclear's abysmal attempt at the Van Morrison classic "Brown Eyed Girl." Everclear chooses to ignore Van Morrison's bouncing playfulness and instead treats the song as if it was a church hymn.

While many of Everclear's attempts fall flat on *Songs*, there are some great tunes on the new album. "AM Radio," which masterfully samples Jean Knight's "Mr. Big Stuff," is possibly the best song on the album. The nostalgic tone of the lyrics is done well, and the band successfully fuses their traditionally cynical nature with a happy-go-lucky theme.

The smooth guitar riffs and the sam-

ple of Public Enemy's "Bring in the Noise," along with Everclear's excellent energy, allow the ironic tone of "Here We Go Again" to shine through.

Overall, *Songs* is a disappointing album. Everclear has never been known for exceptional musical ability, instead successfully leaning on masterful lyric work fraught with irony and anger. The first volume of *Songs* loses some of the band's best qualities. Hopefully, the second album in the set will return to the energy that propelled Everclear to their mainstream status.

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

Lack of Entertaining Options Highlights Writer's Summer

Summer is almost dead. The glorious times of backyard barbecues, suntanning, and pesky mosquitoes are nearly finished as we, college students, have only a few weeks before our reality of schooling begins again.

Has the summer of 2000 been a particularly entertaining one? While some might not be bursting with fruit flavor over their past few months, that doesn't mean that the Hollywood's powers that be have not been trying to give us something, and I mean anything, to do.

With a family emergency that left me practically living in a hospital for a month, I was left to search the television stations night and day looking for the perfect television show to carry my unhappy thoughts away. To my surprise, besides Comedy Central, I realized that summer TV sucks.

Television has caught the voyeurism bug. Summer shows like "Big Brother" and "Survivor" have taken a creepier page from the "Real World" manual by putting together grown-ups with younger adults to see how they interact. Who cares about these people and why are they so special? Next summer, in an attempt to go "younger," CBS is putting 10 infants in a gigantic bubble for three months to see how much they miss their mommies. I may be kidding.

Game shows are also getting more outrageous, thanks to that "Millionaire"

JUSTIN WINTERS
ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

show. My fave has to be the USA network's "Strip Poker." It involves two pairs of super-fit contestants answering mundane questions to keep from taking off all their clothes (minus the skivvies). Is this what respectable people do on their day off? Someone please bring back "Press Your Luck!"

This summer has also teleported many exquisite selections to my list of "Songs I Would Rather Never Hear Again." I can take MTV's teasing so-called show "Undressed" every so often, and Sisqo has taught me how to shake my groove thing, but every song on "TRL" can just please be gone by summer's end.

And since I am movies and movies are me, I can't stand some of the films I have seen this summer. Besides "Gladiator," which came out ages ago, and "X-Men," which I still say rocks, nothing has really tooted my horn.

We can most likely expect more

movies like the hilarious but ultra-vulgar "Scary Movie" in the future though. Shots of testicles and jokes about manly fluids make me laugh occasionally but do nothing for my grandparents in terms of entertainment. And some wonder why the geriatric Oscar voters never vote for summer flicks.

Chapel Hill has been an entertaining thrill this summer for those people who love it best. A wooden barricade has segregated us from the important monument formerly known as the Student Union steps. Supposedly, it has begun, according to the signs, and will never ever end again. I pity all the poor tour guides who have to explain what it actually is. "Well, ya'll see, this is, well, don't worry about that. Here is our glorious eating establishment known as Lenoir."

So, with the summer of 2000 approaching its end, there is still time to carpe diem before August 22. Go on roadtrips. Make fun of C-TOPpers. Start a dot-com. Just have fun. I heard we'll miss these summers when they're gone.

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

The Princeton Review
Better Scores, Better Schools

Let's Talk **LSAT**

Classes begin August 26

CALL 1-800-2-REVIEW
www.review.com

CARBARRITOS

TAQUERIA

711 W Rosemary St
Carrboro
Monday-Saturday
11am-10pm
Closed Sunday
933.8226

HE'S NOT HERE
on the Village Green

FRI. July 28st... Pfiesteria

SAT. July 29nd... Platinum Heavyweights

TUESDAYS: BLUE CUP SPECIAL \$3.00
SUNDAYS: KARAOKE NIGHT

LSAT

What LSAT course did students at the top 25 law schools take?

All Others

1997 Bruskin-Golding Research Study of students at the top 25 law schools who prepared for the LSAT using a course

KAPLAN 75%

Classes beginning July 27th August 29th October 11th

KAPLAN

Chapel Hill Office Now Open On Rosemary Street
1-800-KAP-TEST
www.kaplan.com • AOL keyword: kaplan
*LSAT is a registered trademark of the Law School Admission Council.

Been a while since you've seen this face?

Participate in our life-saving & financially rewarding plasma donation program.

IMMEDIATE COMPENSATION!

Donors Earn up to \$165 per Month!

* New donors earn \$20 for first visit, \$35 for the second visit within 7 days. New donors call for appointment.

Call or stop by: **Sera-Tec Biologicals**

109 1/2 E. Franklin St., Chapel Hill • 942-0251 • MWF 10-4, TTh 10-6

Emma
Contemporary Fashions

End of Season Sale
Clearance 30% Off

All Spring & Summer Merchandise

171 E. Franklin St. Chapel Hill 919.929.0803