

'Angel Eyes' Proves Too Enigmatic

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Managing Editor

A long time ago you would know what a movie was about before you bought your ticket. A thriller was a thriller, a love story was a love story — you get the idea.

But lately you'll see a trailer on television, you see the film's poster and you still have no idea what you're going to see.

"Angel Eyes" exudes this enigmatic and often frustrating mystique. Even after 30 minutes of the film, you're not sure what you're watching.

Jennifer Lopez plays Sharon, a tough cop on the streets of Chicago. She meets Catch (Jim Caviezel), with whom she shares a strange connection. The two develop a strange attraction that prompts both of them to reexamine their tortured pasts in order to have a future.

The blurring of genres is usually a welcome thing, but a film has to lay its cards on the table eventually. Is "Angel Eyes" a cop drama? A film about a men-

tal case stalking a beautiful cop? A "If These Walls Could Talk"-esque exploration of domestic violence and regret?

The film is probably all these things, but eventually it reveals itself as a sappy love story. Like "Nurse Betty," which was equally enigmatic until the end of the film, "Angel Eyes" combines gritty street violence and Jerry Springer-esque family drama with an old-fashioned love story.

It's an interesting mixture of familiar movie plots, and is mostly effective once the film reveals itself. But like the secretive nature of the characters, it takes a while for the film to come clean.

The reason for all the secrecy is because, like most love stories, "Angel Eyes" stands on shaky ground. The connection between Sharon and Catch, and their reunion of sorts, suspends disbelief.

Not that the cast doesn't try to make it work. Lopez has an affinity for playing tough police women ("Out of Sight," "The Cell"), and she does an admirable job for dissolving her character's "pissed off Latino" stereotype into a suitable female lead for a love story.

The passive-aggressive nature of

Sharon provides Lopez the chance to flex her acting muscles, which are as considerable as her six-pack. And while some of her scenes feel hollow, she's talented enough to give those who hate her "J. Lo" image a reason to respect her.

As Catch, Caviezel is required to be kind, mysterious and a mental case all at the same time. It's a hefty amount of personalities to attribute to one character, and Caviezel buckles under the character's demands on occasion. But it's undeniable that Caviezel and Lopez have a wonderfully tense chemistry, and he only falters when he is onscreen without her support.

But no matter how good Caviezel and Lopez are together, the plot that

introduces their romance borders on inane. Perhaps this is why Director Luis Mandoki ("Message in a Bottle") chose to emphasize the film's emotional resonance rather than its plot.

Mandoki ultimately addresses the importance of forgiving yourself — until you become comfortable with yourself, you will not escape your loneliness. It's a poignant message, and one that manipulatively brings tears to the audience.

So do yourself a favor and wait to see "Angel Eyes" so you can have a good cry in the privacy of your own home.

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Latest Animated Flick Too Mature for Kids

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Disney's animated adaptation of William Steig's children's book about an ornery ogre and his quest to rescue a beautiful princess, "Shrek" is a raucous, fun-filled fairy tale for older audiences.

Rated PG for crude humor and mild language, "Shrek" succeeds as the first animated Disney flick that won't make you gag with mushiness, gooey sentimentality or superfluous tidings of goodwill.

Though the film encourages acceptance and friendship, its story line is far from sappy. It incorporates sexual innuendo, wry wit and satire in a blast to all things excessively warm and fuzzy.

Disney procured several high-profile actors: Shrek is voiced by Mike Meyers; Cameron Diaz is Princess Fiona; John Lithgow is the evil Lord Farquaad (said fartwad) and Eddie Murphy is the jackass, oops, I mean donkey.

Meyers and Murphy shine as the hero and his noble steed. Murphy is in fact indispensable, his performance worthy of an Oscar (if only they gave Oscars for such things). Who ever thought a donkey could be so wonderfully entertaining?

But be warned, "Shrek" is NOT a movie for children. Unless your children (assuming you have them) are at least 10 years old, I would advise against taking them. While most of the film's humor would be over many five-year-olds' heads (a fact that may also make the movie somewhat boring for them), the crudeness of it all is inappropriate for youngsters. Parental supervision is definitely suggested.

The film is a certainly capable of producing a hearty laugh for the adult crowd though. Improved animation techniques have allowed for more detailed facial expressions, making characters seem almost human ... well, as human as fairy-tale creatures can be. "Shrek" is consequently more engaging than any previous Disney creation.

The only down side to "Shrek" is the questionable focus issues. I'm unsure if "Shrek's" advanced animation somehow has surpassed a film reel's ability to be focused or if the crew at the theater is just too dense to realize that the picture is NOT supposed to be blurry.

But go, go, go, go to the theater. Drop your dollars at the ticket counter and take a front and center seat. If you keep your eyes peeled for the Gingerbread Man, you're guaranteed to have a good time.

This film is one Disney flick I won't call you a sissy for watching.

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R.E.M. Rebounds From Up With Focused Reveal

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What a difference three years makes. When R.E.M. released *Up* in 1998, it was met with a critical and public response that was lukewarm at best.

And as much as R.E.M. have become the sacred cows of popular music, the criticisms of *Up* were deserved.

With the exception of the brilliant "At My Most Beautiful," the album was a little too unfocused, a little too abstract. It was even more disturbing considering the consistent quality the band exuded on its 13 previous efforts.

But listening to *Reveal* nearly erases the memory of *Up*'s failed experiment. In light of the delicate, orchestral stylings of *Reveal*, *Up* merely seems like the trailer to *Reveal*'s feature presentation.

R.E.M. have clearly adjusted to its current set-up as a trio on *Reveal*, given the departure of drummer Phil Berry. Trading Berry's rhythms for straight-up Brian Wilson and Burt Bacharach influences, *Reveal*'s mixture of guitar, orchestra and electronica ebbs, flows and swells around lead singer Michael Stipe's somewhat subdued phrasing.

While the "kinder, gentler" approach to the album is an interesting shift, *Reveal*'s best songs are often the most conventionally structured. Both "Beat a Drum" and the current single, "Imitation of Life," have more grounding than the rest of the album's meanderings. It helps balance Stipe's often choppy phrasing.

Lyrical, Stipe turns his musings on celebrity culture's tendency to both set people on pedestals and knock them off, which is probably a touchy subject because of the public's response to *Up*.

Otherwise, the songs of the album are surprisingly sunny breakup songs. "I'll Take the Rain" continues the swelling, fluid arrangements that characterize the album, though you're not sure what to feel during the song. But like the rest of the album, R.E.M. seems to argue that you should be feeling something.

The album probably won't win over fairweather fans who have their copy of *Out of Time* clutched firmly to their chests. Like its predecessor, *Reveal* still has an abstract and oddly baroque feel despite its air-tight arrangements. It will most likely not win over any fans wanting another "Losing My Religion."

But that's not by definition a bad thing.

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