

Dunst 'Beautiful;' Film 'Crazy'

By JONATHAN MILLER
Online Editor

Clichéd love stories come a dime a dozen. Check out TNT, Lifetime or USA any night to see rehashed stories of love and love lost.

It's a timeless story; maybe that's why it gets repeated so much. Boy watches girl from afar. Boy falls for girl. Boy and girl have problems, etc.



Unoriginality can never help dramas; after all, they are solely based around a stories. Think "Braveheart," then think "The Patriot." Which one is better and why?

"Crazy/beautiful" flirts with falling into the same trap as all those films that few remember anyway. Borrowing heavily from both "West Side Story" and "Splendor in the Grass," the film chronicles the social and racial clash between Nicole Oakley (Kirsten Dunst) and East L.A. resident Carlos Nuñez (Jay Hernandez).

The only deviation from the standard

formula is that Carlos is the driven, clean-cut type trying to succeed in an trouble-plagued environment and Dunst is the self-destructive, neurotic half of the pair.

Judging by the story, the film is in desperate need of help to avoid flopping.

Enter Kirsten Dunst ex machina. Dunst's performance redeems this film. Nicole Oakley is an affluent but delinquent teen who spends her days in a ritzy high school with no goals to strive for and a stepmother who does not understand her.

This character is more dynamic and interesting than the character she played in "Bring It On." Instead of a preppy high school cheerleader, Dunst plays a troubled teen who has problems with loss and constantly competes for her father's attention with his new wife.

The depth of emotion that Dunst taps into in this film is unmatched. The role she undertakes is the most complex of any in her short but impressive career.

Her performance is also her raciest to date (Who really wears bras nowadays anyway?). Though only 19, Dunst seems

to have no trouble acting intimately with newcomer Jay Hernandez. Their sex scenes are tasteful and effective and illustrate the evolution of their relationship.

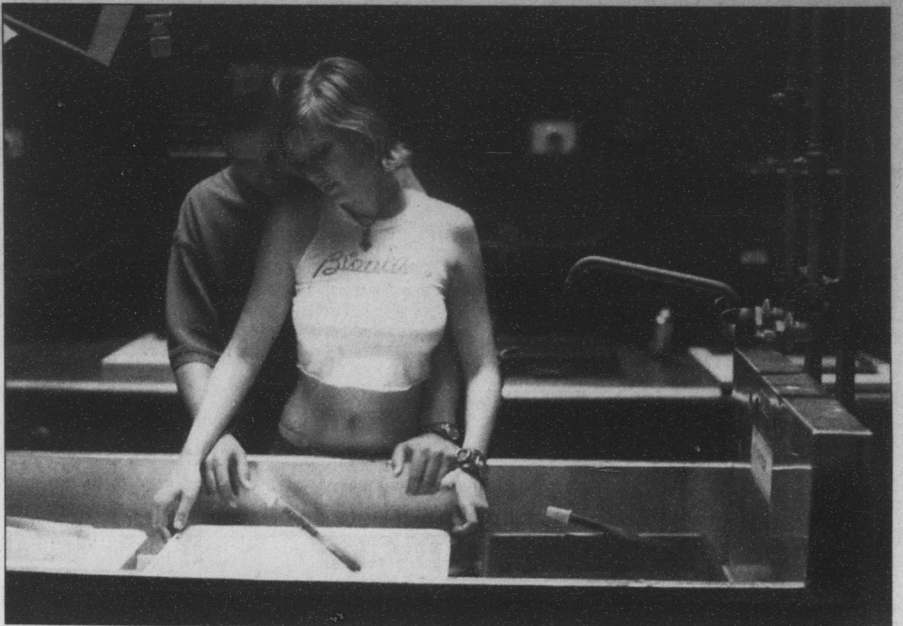
This role is a marked change from her previous outings and a good sign of the mature roles that Dunst is capable of performing.

Supporting actors help Dunst's performance shine. Hernandez, Dunst's intelligent and highly motivated love interest, keeps up with the more experienced Dunst reasonably well.

Bruce Davison also provides a strong role as Dunst's congressman father but does not really get to exercise his chops until the film is nearly finished. Despite appearing late in the film, Davison makes excellent use of his limited screen time to solidify an otherwise paltry storyline.

Even though Dunst and company portray believable characters, good actors cannot save a mediocre story.

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Jay Hernandez and Kirsten Dunst star in "crazy/beautiful," a film that revisits the "star-crossed lovers" schtick. Not even high-quality acting from Dunst and the rest of the cast could save this film from itself.

'Baby Boy' Deserves Spanking

By ADRIAL DALE
Staff Writer

The newest John Singleton movie, "Baby Boy," argues black people degrade themselves and their culture.

It's an interesting argument, but the message unfortunately gets lost and falls short amidst exaggerated sexuality and a bland plot.

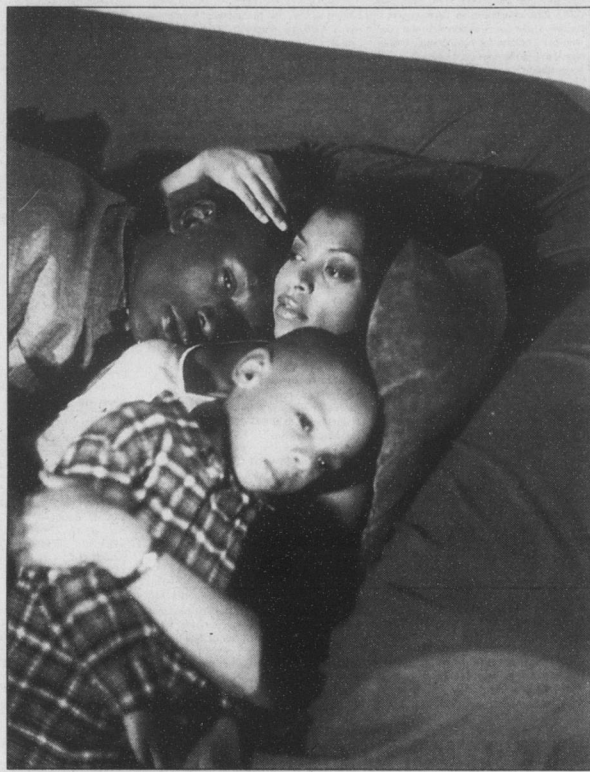
Jody (Tyrese Gibson) is a 20-year-old thug with a dream to succeed in self-employment, but who still lives with his mama, Juanita (A.J. Johnson).

As a habitual player in the "game of women," Jody has two toddler children with two different mothers: Yvette (Taraji Henson) and Peanut (Tamara LaSeon Bass). At the same time, he feels the need to continue to sleep around. As the movie plays out, you are bombarded with the proposition that Jody is, as the title suggests, truly a baby boy as he is forced to deal with difficult and sometimes confrontational situations.

The plot is acted out much like a ghetto soap opera, except without all of the captivating twists and turns for which real soap operas are known. There are no areas of suspense in the entire movie, which makes a pillow and a good book almost necessary theater materials for this anti-thriller.

The plot was a straight shot from beginning to end without any subplots or redundancies. It focused mainly on the sex-centric relationship between Jody and his first "baby mama," Yvette. This pseudo-romance ended up being dry and virtually emotionless, while the substandard acting dragged it down even further.

Apparently, the film chose to value sex above acting. "Baby Boy" is so sexually charged that one might feel embarrassed to be watching such graphic depictions of sex — many of which seem to come right from some tacky porn — with other moviegoers in the same room.



Jody (Tyrese Gibson), Yvette (Taraji Henson) star in "Baby Boy," John Singleton's latest examination of black men in modern society.

And all the sex, like most of the movie, fails to stimulate. Ultimately, "Baby Boy" is a simple "Boyz in the Hood" love story gone wrong that loses its capacity for interest after the first half-hour and continues to wander into pointlessness throughout the remainder of the film.

A more meaningful love story is one of the many ways the film could recover.

er. But the relationship between Jody and the girl he supposedly loves, Yvette, is not convincing enough to make the audience care, simultaneously creating a similar feeling toward the whole movie — the inability to care less.

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Film Chronicles Dot-Com Woes

By ALLYSSON SHAFFER
Staff Writer

"Startup.com" may be a documentary, but not in the National Geographic "this is how tiger's mate" style of film.

Instead, it has a strong story-like, voyeuristic feel. More than just the life of an Internet business, the film focuses on the co-founders' personal lives and the lifestyle the e-commerce imposes on them.

It takes the how-to of creating and maintaining an Internet business and adds two actual people's stories, making the documentary more engaging.

The characters add a certain realistic and human flavor to the film, making what could be a tedious collection of facts much more interesting.

The viewer still learns about the world of e-business as co-founders Tom Herman and Kaleil Isaza Tuzman try to create and maintain govworks.com, a Web site meant to allow citizens to pay fines like parking tickets online.

As Herman and Tuzman scramble

for financial backing, they struggle to create an effective and innovative service and attempt to fend off dangerous competitors.

And the pair's troubles don't stop there. After a long day at the office, Herman struggles to keep his energetic and very distracted 5-year-old in his lap long enough to brush her hair into presentable ponytails.

Tuzman tries to deal with a girlfriend who demands either a puppy or a baby when he wants neither.

And they both attempt to maintain a friendship that started when they were 15 and is now challenged everyday by their conflicting professional and personal spheres. Eventually the pair find success on their own terms.

The mix of the entrepreneurial and the personal is interesting, but the film is far from perfect. Throughout the film,

the hand-held camera switches focus amateur-style, swooshing from one subject to the next.

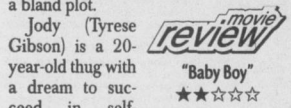
After just 10 minutes, you'll begin to wish the editor had spent more time making cuts.

And after about an hour, you might get a headache and feel slightly sick.

The goal is good, but the cinematography could stand to be a great deal smoother. The camera work becomes distracting; it could have achieved the same authentic feel with more editing.

But ultimately the film is not eye candy. Focusing on Herman and Tuzman's story rather than the film's technical prowess, "Startup.com" insists on rising above the techno-babble.

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