

# N.C. filmmaker captures Sandler flick sparks 'Anger' beauty of life in 'Girls'

BY ERIN SULLIVAN  
STAFF WRITER

Artistically, North Carolina has a lot to be proud of these days. With David Sedaris' treble voice all over NPR and Ryan Adams insulting fans worldwide, the Tar Heel state can finally claim more than a couple of obscure presidents and some tobacco companies.

Now, with the emergence of filmmaker David Gordon Green, the list gets a little longer.

An N.C. School of the Arts graduate, Green first got critics talking in 2000 with his lyrical debut, "George Washington."

Three years later, it looks as though his sophomore effort, "All the Real Girls," is about to do the same.

Shot outside Asheville, "All the Real Girls" tells the story of Paul, a young man in a small town on the verge of love.

After years of wasting away in mindless jobs and empty relationships, Paul (Paul Schneider, who also co-wrote the film) begins to feel something different when he starts spending time with his best friend's sister, Noel.

Newly home from boarding school, Noel (a luminous Zoey Deschanel) beguiles Paul with her

**MOVIE REVIEW**

**"ALL THE REAL GIRLS"**  
★★★★

quirky, frank expressiveness.

Noel's every word and gesture demonstrate love with the freshness and delicacy it deserves, and it is through her character that "All the Real Girls" manages to transform an often banal topic — first love — into the unique and beautiful experience it should be.

Deschanel's previous work in "Almost Famous" and "The Good Girl" capitalized superbly on her knack for comedy, but here — in her first leading role — she shines as the graceful and loving Noel.

And Schneider, though sometimes a bit difficult to read, delivers his lines with a goofy frankness that endears him to the audience's heart.

Don't be fooled, though, into thinking that this is just a film about love — or even two people, for that matter.

As Paul and Noel's relationship progresses, a kaleidoscope of images and sounds chips away at the bigger story at stake — one about death, dreams and learning to live with loss.

Green unfolds "All the Real Girls" at a languid, dreamy pace, skillfully using editing, rhythm and cinematography to bring his story to life. Dialogue still maintains an important role, but mostly toward the development of comedy and charm. In this inscrutable world, language just doesn't quite suffice.

As a result, "All the Real Girls" often pairs the profound with the trivial — one man's meditation on happiness is followed by another's decision to grow a beard. It's absurd, but then again, so is life.

Sadly, some kinks in the plot steer the film off-track toward the end, but that's still not enough to overshadow Green's magic. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then an emotion is worth at least double, and Green's expressive spell transcends complications in the script.

In the end, "All the Real Girls" succeeds at cracking open the beauty and mystery of everyday life, and despite its flaws, the result is gorgeous.

As for Green — who's still in his 20s — an exciting, remarkable career surely looms in the near future. As for North Carolina, its creative ante just got raised a little higher.

Contact the A&E Editor at [artsdesk@unc.edu](mailto:artsdesk@unc.edu).

BY MICHELLE JARBOE  
STAFF WRITER

Watching "Anger Management" is a bit like looking at a magic eye poster.

Either it clicks instantly or you can't see it at all and you begin to wonder why you're sitting there, frustrated, staring at something so pointless in the first place.

Jack Nicholson and Adam Sandler might be an unlikely pair, but there's potential for humor and originality in the combination. Wasted potential, in the case of this particular film.

"Anger Management" tells the story of Dave Buznik (Sandler), a harmless, put-upon businessman whose life turns topsy-turvy when he inadvertently becomes the aggressor in several quirky situations.

Forced into an anger management class, Buznik is placed under the constant supervision and tutelage of Dr. Buddy Rydell (Nicholson), seemingly the quintessential psychopath.

As Rydell destroys Buznik's life, the two characters bond by singing "I Feel Pretty" in a stopped car and assaulting Buddhist monks.

Occasionally campy yet rarely funny, the film is missing the pervasive ridiculousness that usually characterizes Adam Sandler films.

The comic superstar subdues his antics throughout much of the film. And when funny emerges, it's too little too late.

Unlike films such as "Happy Gilmore," where slapstick, bathroom humor can be expected and even desired, "Anger Management" doesn't have enough "ha ha" throughout to merit its more childish moments.

Instead, the film merely sparks further frustration as Nicholson's demented doctor devastates a man too average to provoke amusement.

On the plus side, there is entertainment value in watching

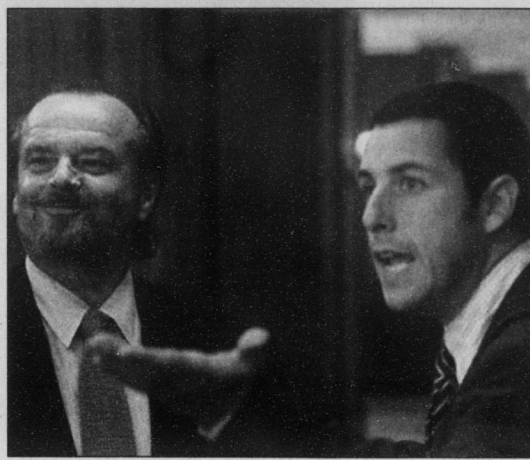


PHOTO COURTESY OF COLUMBIA PICTURES

Buddy Rydell (Jack Nicholson) and Dave Buznik (Adam Sandler) team up to deal with rage issues in the disappointing 'Anger Management.'

**MOVIE REVIEW**

**"ANGER MANAGEMENT"**  
★★

Nicholson sport a sappy grin, trill lines from a Leonard Bernstein musical and feed gibberish soothing words to his crackpot patients.

Most often, though, Sandler and Nicholson fail to endear or amuse. And Marisa Tomei and Heather Graham don't add much with their fairly small and insipid performances, either.

Tomei, who plays Buznik's girlfriend, Linda, perfects the art of adding aesthetics to a scene. But standing there and looking pretty doesn't substitute well for actual acting.

Graham, on the other hand, has one mildly funny moment, in a disturbingly disgusting way. As Buznik's potential paramour, she seduces, strips, then stuffs her mouth with chocolate brownies while wearing only underwear.

Even such juvenile humor as this sparsely speckles the plot of the generally vapid film.

The male co-stars have established their own brands of humor through past works.

But neither actor reaches par in comparison to his previous performances.

Though "Billy Madison" and "Big Daddy" aren't quite avant-garde filmmaking, they're far superior to the final product of "Anger Management."

And Nicholson's past work in movies such as "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" and "As Good as It Gets" remains at odds with such a frustrating flop of a film.

Yet the true tragedy of "Anger Management" is neither the acting nor the failed comedic attempts — it's that the viewer might need some anger therapy after dropping dollars on this movie ticket.

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