

CINEMA

Travolta's good, but Mikey steals the show

Look Who's Talking

Kirstie Alley, John Travolta,
the voice of Bruce Willis
directed by Amy Heckerling

Ram Triple
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Have you ever noticed the expression on a baby's face and wondered what in the world he or she is thinking about? Fortunately, director and screenwriter Amy Heckerling (*Fast Times at Ridgemont High* and *Johnny Dangerously*) brings the mysterious world of baby thoughts to the screen in *Look Who's Talking*, a hysterical romantic comedy starring Kirstie Alley, John Travolta and the unmistakable vocal talents of Bruce Willis as the voice of Mikey.

Mollie (Kirstie Alley), a hard working CPA in her mid-30s, is in the midst of an affair with her best client, Albert (George Segal), who keeps promising to divorce his wife. But when Mollie discovers that she's pregnant, it becomes obvious that he's in no hurry to follow through.

To save Albert's reputation, Mollie tells everyone that she was artificially inseminated. When she sees Albert with another woman, she flies into a rage and then into labor. That's when John Travolta comes in as the cab driver that has to get her to the hospital after racing through a barrage of New York City street obstacles and alleys (no pun intended).

As a result, Mollie is left alone with a newborn child and no father. (Okay, okay. I realize by now all you

DONALD BECK film

ladies are saying to yourself, "Just like a man. Pig!" But this is where it gets good.) She decides to find the perfect father for Mikey on her own. But little does she know, Mikey has his own opinions on that subject.

Mollie's adventures in dating offer some of the funniest scenes in the movie. During each date Mollie imagines a future with each prospective man as Mikey's father. Although she tries the safe, secure types, she thinks they would all be bad fathers.

Which leads us to the main man in our story, Mikey. He may look like just another baby, but inside Mikey is a mound of mischief with thoughts (which the movie-goers can hear) about everything. From the time of conception onward, Mikey's comments are the highlight of the movie. A film where a child knows what's better for him than his own mother is an excellent formula for laughter.

The mastermind behind the concept is Amy Heckerling, who says that she was inspired by her own baby daughter. Heckerling is known for her direction of the sensitive yet humorous film *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* and uses her experience here to capture a similar mood.

Although it is unclear at times whether James and Mollie's relationship revolve around their love for Mikey or love for each other, Kirstie Alley and John Travolta give worthy performances.

Though she landed her first feature-film role as the half-Vulcan Lt. Saavik in *Star Trek II: The Wrath of*

Khan, Alley is best known for her work on the hit series *Cheers*, which earned her an Emmy nomination as the strong-headed bar manager Rebecca Howe. She displays an equal amount of talent in *Look Who's Talking* as Mikey's hyperactive, insecure mother. With her naturally pouty face, Alley easily convinces the audience of just how sorry she feels for herself. At the same time, however, she retains her sassy attitude and the determination to do "what's best for Mikey."

John Travolta seems out of character at first but manages to make James' character as lovable as Mikey's. Travolta's previous roles from the degenerate Vinny Barbarino on TV's "Welcome Back Kotter" to the disco junky Tony Manero in *Saturday Night Fever*, which earned him an Academy Award nomination, seem to carry over into this character with more positive results. He's a child trapped in a grown-up's body and a street-wise yet tenderhearted cab driver who finds himself becoming more and more attached to a confused woman and her spunky child.

Bruce Willis gives possibly his funniest performance ever as Mikey's voice. It seems that Willis' vocal cords and cynical attitude were made for the part. Heckerling does an excellent job of matching the baby's expressions to Willis' dialogue. Even if someone didn't hear the words, the expressions could speak for themselves. That is what makes this movie so charming.

Smaller parts by Abe Vigoda (*Barney Miller*) as James' grandfather and Olympia Dukakis (*Moonstruck*) are equally strong. Both are comical characters, but appealing at the same time. Dukakis' dialogue concerning her CPA husband and marriage in



Look familiar? John Travolta shows Mikey his best dance moves in Amy Heckerling's 'Look Who's Talking'

general is a great counterpoint to Alley's confusion.

Look Who's Talking is delightful. From the special effects (courtesy of Magic Vista) showing the development of the wisecracking embryo

onward, it is full of hilarious moments. Kirstie Alley's hysterics are classical and Travolta makes a name for himself as a likable, not laughable, character. But, of course, Mikey is the real star, and steals the show.

Sex and brotherly love fall short of fabulous

The Fabulous Baker Boys

Jeff Bridges, Michelle Pfeiffer,
Beau Bridges

directed by Stephen Kloves

Carolina Blue and White
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What happens when two brothers who have shared a career in piano-playing suddenly realize they have to bring in an outsider to save their act? This is one of many questions asked in Stephen Kloves' *The Fabulous Baker Boys*.

For 31 years, the Baker boys have made it on their own, but their "family business" lacks the enthusiasm or support necessary to survive. Beau and Jeff Bridges play Frank and Jack

BILLY STOCKARD film

Baker, brothers who move from nightclub to nightclub in the hopes of making a decent living. Frank is the older and more responsible of the two; he books their performances and does most of the talking, even during their performances. His foil is the solemn Jack, who doesn't like what he's doing but tries to forget his troubles by sleeping around, boozing and spending time with his dog, Ed.

The moodiness that burdens him isn't that noticeable to his young neighbor, Nina (Ellie Raab), a little girl whose mother goes through as many boyfriends as Jack does liquor bottles. The audience sees Jack's rare soft side only with Nina and Ed. That is, until Susie Diamond comes along.

After getting the don't-call-us-we'll-call-you treatment, Frank pro-

poses that they add a singer to the group. They listen to "37 girls that couldn't carry a tune," including the bubbly Monica Moran (Jennifer Tilly), before they meet Susie Diamond (Michelle Pfeiffer), a girl with no previous experience "except AAA escort service." They are so struck by her talent and beauty that they hire her immediately.

Susie isn't an immediate hit, but after some disastrous opening minutes she wins the audience over. The Bakers finally begin to find success with the new addition. They even turn the tables on managers by telling them "We'll call you."

But Susie can't solve all the Bakers' problems. When Jack and Susie find themselves increasingly attracted to each other, tensions build between the couple and between Jack and Frank. When they finally come to a confrontation, the fallout makes Jack re-evaluate his life and his reasons for staying with the Fabulous Baker Boys act.

The film is an opportunity for Jeff and Beau Bridges to work together for the first time; it could be entitled *The Fabulous Bridges Boys*. It is rare to see such a realistic portrayal of characters; because the Bridges are real brothers, their scenes together, particularly the arguments, are among the best in the movie. Their dialogue and their depth of feeling for each other could only be the result of two actors who are actual brothers.

The incredible Michelle Pfeiffer has shown yet another example of great acting. Susie Diamond may be a follow-up to her Oscar-nominated performance in *Dangerous Liaisons*, but the two roles are hardly similar. As with all her roles, she shows that she can be trashy, human, mysterious or innocent — but always sexy.

The film is also a big break for Jennifer Tilly and Ellie Raab, who provide innocence in a movie filled with sometimes unsavory characters. Tilly's air-headed Monica Moran is

the lightest in intellect and in substance; she is also a contrast to Pfeiffer's sultry Susie Diamond. Raab's Nina is unintimidated by Jack's abrasiveness, and even when he takes out his frustrations on her, she helps him realize how corrupt his life has become.

Writer/director Stephen Kloves and executive producer Sydney Pollack (of *Out of Africa* and *Tootsie*) have created a somber and sometimes slow-paced, yet subtly humorous movie whose theme is well-accented by Dave Grusin's bluesy musical background.

The Fabulous Baker Boys is about people overcoming their weaknesses and facing the truth about their lives. Self-pity, dishonesty, ambition (or lack of it) all play a part in making Kloves' debut a very human picture. While it features two of today's most talented stars, the movie is not likely to become just another notch on the belts of Pfeiffer or Bridges, but will be a springboard for some of Kloves' future, maybe even better, projects.