

Trashy new movie release definitely is not an 'angel'

By Ward W. Triplett III

There's a bottom line in the movie caste system, where the filmmakers are obviously destitute of money and style. This kind of film generally has the worst of everything, and the main trick is to try to understand why anyone

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would make such a bad movie.

Enter *Angel*. *Angel* rots in comparison to those better category films, and the jury is still out as to whether it even cuts it in the bottom line caste. But due to one actor's performance, *Angel* shows it might have had some heart before someone turned the screenwriter loose.

Angel's story even sounds trashy. *Angel*, alias Molly, is a high school honor student by day, though not exactly a popular kid because she goes to school and goes straight home — a sin since the school's macho playboy is after her.

At night, Molly parades the streets with a rag-tag bunch of hookers and street showmen. Even though she actually picks up only one trick during the course of the film, she's supposed to be one of the best call girls around.

If that conflict of lifestyles intrigues you, and newcomer Donna Wilkes' performance does entice you to care a bit, then you might see the makings of a decent movie here. *Angel's* scenes around the high school and the inevitable scenes that come after Molly's

profession discovered by that high school playboy are by far the best. The hooker crew is colorful enough, and had the filmmakers tried to capitalize on those strengths, this might have been a long shot success.

But, by gosh, the directors didn't think the public would find that interesting enough. So they throw in a psychotic killer, who dispatches the prostitutes one by one in the gruesome fashion of those teenage slasher movies that were so chic among this set not long ago. The result is an unsettling rehash of a boring pattern . . . killer slashes girl's friends — girl learns to trust cop — killer slashes girl's best friend — girl mistrusts cop, turns vigilante for self protection (the sudden strength and courage motif) — girl and cop kill killer in the end.

Angel then becomes another cheap exploitation of sex (though there's very little of it) and violence and is invariably doomed to its place on the HBO late night shift.

But before burying it completely, someone ought to give Dick Shawn credit. The veteran actor plays a female impersonator who serves as Molly's very unofficial but dedicated guardian. While I can't quite figure out how the character made a living as a prostitute, Shawn's bitter humor and wit and extraordinary timing make him stand out like gold in an otherwise muddy film.

If *Angel* had been left to Molly's conflicts, I've got to believe Shawn would be getting some of the same positive attention John Lithgow got after his drag portrayal in *The World According to Garp*. And *Angel* would be a pretty good film.

Drama on ice . . .

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Robert: Only if you use too much. You have to learn how to gauge these things. You have to know when to draw the line. I worked at McDonald's for six years. I've filled a million glasses of pop. I've seen what happens when you put too much ice in a glass. You end up with runny Coke, or a glass full of ice after you're through. I've seen what happens with no ice. Your drink goes flat. The only solution is a compromise — just enough ice to keep it cold but not enough to ruin it. Can't you see the reasonableness of my position?

Stephen: Quite frankly, no. I think you're just a little bit nuts. (Stephen storms out of the room.)

Robert: What about you? I suppose you think I'm crazy, too.

Mitchell: No. I just don't understand what you've got against ice.

Robert: (exasperated) I don't know. I just don't know.

(Lights out)

Allister: And so, *World On The Brink* draws to an end, the protagonist, Robert, more desolate than before. We are privileged enough to have as special guests tonight, Messrs. Glenn Stuva and Tom Mockler, who I understand are good friends with Mr. Smith.

Glenn: Yes, Edward and I are very good friends. You might say we're almost alter egos.

Allister: Tell me, Tom, what's your interpretation of this play?

Tom: As with many of Edward's plays, I view it as a cry for moderation in a polarized society. Individuals are forced to make

artificial choices, when there is room for compromise and yet, those at the extremes refuse to budge. I think this play closely parallels the Democratic primaries.

Glenn: So much has been written and said about this play that it's perilous to put forth any one interpretation as the correct one, but I think Tom's is pretty close to what the playwright had in mind. Of course Edward, always the modest one, still main-

tains the play is nothing more than a comic piece about three silly people arguing over something completely inconsequential. (Amused, they all chuckle.)

Allister: Yes, I remember him saying something to that effect when he accepted the Pulitzer. I wonder why so many great artists try to belittle their achievements?

Tom: I don't know. I just don't know.

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