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'Under the Rainbow' more mindless fluff for summer

By Pat Higgins

The late comedian and noted cynic Fred Allen once described television as "chewing gum for the mind." Movies released this summer could easily be included in this lightweight category as they have consistently aimed at mindless entertainment, which is not necessarily a bad concept. However, when these summer movies fail on a gut entertainment level, there is something definitely wrong.

movie review

Under the Rainbow follows right along with this new tradition of pure fluff in movies. It could also easily become a hit as it is probably no better or worse than *Stripes*, which is cleaning up at the box office. After all, this is a time when *Raiders of the Lost Ark* is being hailed as a classic.

The basic concept for *Under the Rainbow* sounds promisingly ridiculous. It is set in Hollywood in 1938 during the filming of *The Wizard of Oz*, at a hotel where 150 little people who are playing the Munchkins are encamped along with a busload of Japanese tourists who are armed with cameras in use at all times (in 1938?). Throw in a Nazi spy, (incidentally, Nazis still make the best villains in the business), add Chevy Chase as a Secret Service man and Carrie Fisher as the Oz talent director and there is a possibility for chaos, but it quickly degenerates into cheap slapstick.

Chase's acting suffering

It has become increasingly difficult to take Chevy Chase seriously, as he continues his string of vapid attempts at film comedy. Since leaving "Saturday Night Live," Chase has apparently decided to become the Rod Stewart of comedy, as he has gone so disgustingly Hollywood that he is losing any artistic credibility whatsoever. Chase seems destined to become a road company version of Cary Grant as he mixes the romantic lead with some light

comedy. *Caddyshack* was the only exception to this style, as Chase showed some of the old subversive touch that made him first among equals on "Saturday Night Live."

Looking back on the promising comedy talent of the mid-70s, it seems that no one has lived up to their potential. Today, "Saturday Night Live" is on hold, *National Lampoon* is boring, and all the erstwhile hip comedians such as Steve Martin and Lily Tomlin make only fair movies. Actually the best act around today is "Second City TV," which rivals the original "Saturday Night Live" for ensemble chemistry.

Chase is passably decent in *Under the Rainbow* as he spews off some of his typical innuendoes and wisecracks. Also a nice touch is Chase playing a G-man, especially when he shows off his badge.

Script below par

Carrie Fisher is under-utilized here just as she was in *The Blues Brothers*, which is a waste of talent. Fisher has been consistently irreverent and mocking ever since *Shampoo*. Fisher and Chase play off each other fairly well, but that it not enough. Pat McCormick, Johnny Carson's chief monologue writer, co-wrote *Under the Rainbow* and also plays a big part as a constantly-boozing hotel detective. McCormick is talented, but the script, which four others contributed to, does not hold together all that well. At times it seems that they want to make a social statement that little people, as they are called, are just regular folks, then a minute later there is a height joke.

Under the Rainbow was directed by Steve Rich, who previously did the fine *Buddy Holly Story*. Perhaps his budget was too big on this movie because he wastes considerable time and energy on that hackneyed old stand-by—the chase scene. Also, the ending of *Under the Rainbow* is so unbelievably corny that it boggles the mind.

Chase should team up with Lampoon veteran Michael (Mr. Mike) O'Donohue and make the quality movie that he is capable of doing.

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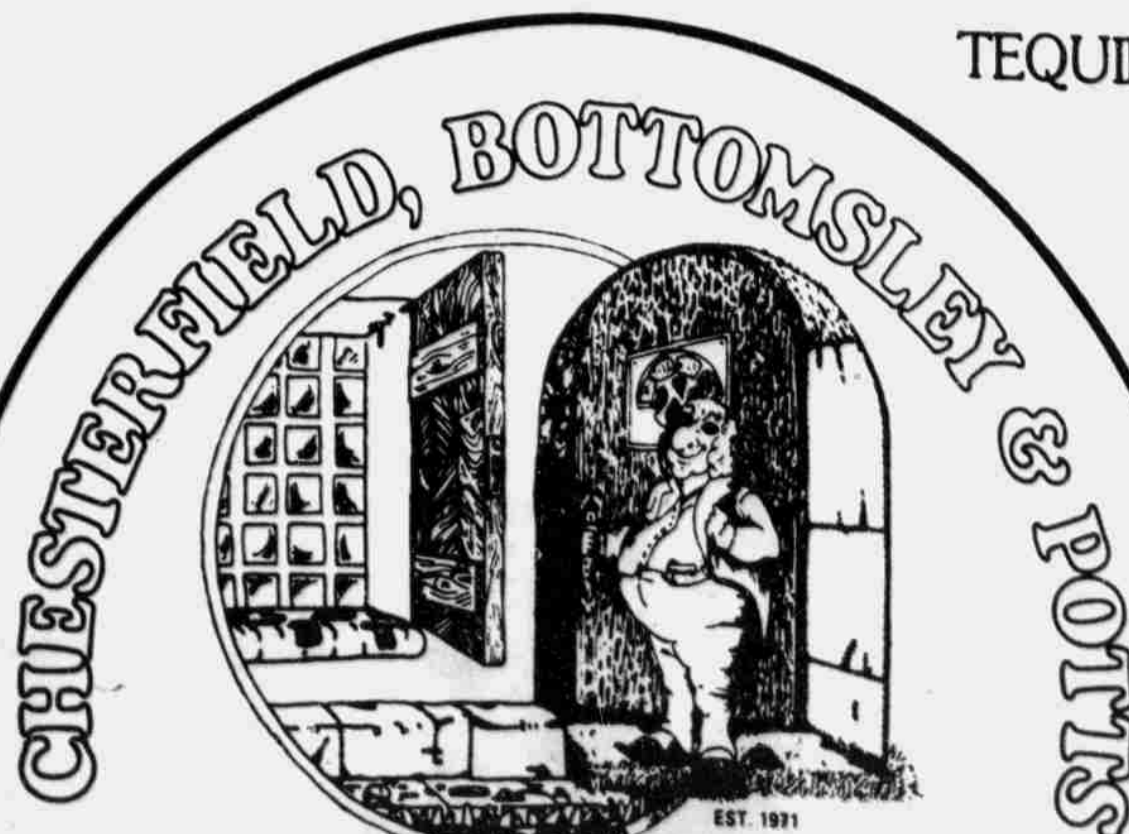
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