

Film displays new Diane Keaton: Not funny, not profound, but real

By David Thompson

Richard was startled into attempting to force words through his tears. 'We do get along, that's the trouble, so it doesn't show even to us - 'That we do not love each other was the rest of the sentence; he couldn't finish it.
—John Updike

First, Diane Keaton was the neurotic Annie Hall, setting the fashion for millions of sheep-like teenagers. Then she was the strong, intelligent writer who crawled across Russia in *Reds*. Now, in *Shoot the Moon*, she tries to hit a few other colors of the rainbow and succeeds admirably.

The problem is that some people may not like this color. Keaton is not funny in this picture. She is not profound. She is not even mature. But she is real. In *Shoot the Moon* she plays an ordinary housewife. As such,



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some people may not find her as interesting or as likeable. They may also not find the picture as absorbing. (It would take a pretty dim bulb not to be lit up by *Reds*.) But the film is fascinating, and it makes an important point about us ordinary folk.

The point is made through the marriage of George and Faith (Keaton) Dunlap. They have four daughters who live in a cloud of chaos, gabbing and giggling wherever they go. Very early in the film George leaves Faith after a typical dishbreaking scene. The problem is that we don't know why they break up. The "ladyfriend" excuse is too easy. The kids are a hassle, but that's not a good excuse either. We don't find out what the real problems in their relationship are.

Bogged down

Scriptwriter Bo Goldman doesn't let us find out. George and Faith never discuss the real problems between them. Instead, with Goldman's skillful portrayal, they are bogged down in middle class values. All they talk about are objects, possessions, the kids, and food.

To Goldman food is a symbol for all that is inane and unimportant. It represents all of the meaningless things that draw our attention away from what really matters: how we feel about each other and how we communicate. Food, along with all the other junk of life, always gets in

the way. When George and Faith are on the verge of a meaningful conversation, one of the kids comes in and says, "Molly threw up her eclair."

Goldman's avoidance of the real conflict within the marriage is an imitation of reality. Too often people don't talk to each other about each other. Instead they get caught up in other things. Faith says, "We should be grownups, shouldn't we George?" She knows what they should do, but like most people they fail to do it.

Kids give humor

The only person in the film who is grown up is George and Faith's oldest daughter, Sherry. She is a precocious child attempting to make some sense out of her childish parents. She and the other kids give the film its humor, bumbling about with hot chocolate and tennis rackets while their parents bumble about with their marriage and with life.

Goldman feels sorry for these people lost in childish middle-class meaninglessness. He conceals this sorrow delicately. It can even be found in something so subtle as Faith's name. When George sees her talking to another man he calls out "Faith! Faith!" But she has no faith, so she doesn't answer.

Finally, when the feelings that are never discussed surface, they explode in a powerful scene. George cries out again for faith. He needs something for these people to hold onto besides self-involved silence.

Don't let all this analysis scare you away. Thanks to the kids and to a few funny scenes, Goldman has laced his film with light humor as he did in *Melvin and Howard*. The film is also striking just to watch. The photography and direction are flawless. Director Alan Parker has used the camera angle to its fullest extent, making every scene a painting. In one scene he acknowledges, on purpose perhaps, his previous film *Fame* by having the children sing the title song. From indoors to outdoors, from the seaside to the bathtub, the film is visually perfect.

Shoot the Moon expands the horizons of the sacred ground broken by such films as *Kramer vs. Kramer* and *Ordinary People*. It is more demanding than those films, because it is closer to reality. People just don't make speeches like they do in the movies, and this film doesn't have any speeches. Unfortunately people don't talk about things. "You walked out feet first," Faith says to George. That's how life goes, sadly enough. Feet first, the head and the heart later.

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