

Footloose: Too sappy story, not enough dancing to enjoy

By Jeff Willcox

What, you may ask, is the biggest cause of teenagers' sexual irresponsibility? According to the minister in *Footloose*, it's dancing. *Dancing*? Yes, dancing. Praise the Lord and amen.

Footloose is set in Beaumont, Utah, a typical Podunk, U.S.A. town where the residents are about as exciting as a white sale at Sears.

The highly moral citizens of Beaumont, under the divine guidance of the Reverend Shaw Moore (John Lithgow), have outlawed rock 'n' roll music and dancing. Enter Ren McCormick (Kevin Bacon) fresh from Chicago and bursting with wicked ideas that are sure to lead him to eternal damnation. Ren likes rock music and worse, he likes to dance.

Ren is determined to get the citizens of Beaumont to dance and have fun and in the end, you guessed it, the kids get to have a dance. In the meantime, Ren has to win over the Reverend's tempting daughter, Ariel (Lori Singer), beat up the town punks, teach a Beaumont boy to dance, go to school, get falsely accused of dealing drugs, cope with his father leaving his mother and a bunch of other highly moralistic questions that tend to bog down the movie.

I was really excited to go see *Footloose*. I'd seen the promos for the movie on MTV. From the promos, I expected to see a movie with lots of dancing and a good story, something along the lines of *Flashdance*. What I got to see was a very predictable movie with little dancing and a sappy story.

Even though the ads tried to make *Footloose* look like a male version of *Flashdance*, the two aren't even comparable. *Footloose* is only trying to cash in on *Flashdance*'s financial success.

The movie's basic problem is that it's too predictable. Even though the movie is set in 1984 it reeks of the 1950s. The screenplay was written by Dean Pitchford and he seems to have tried to put too much into the story, including laws, book burning, girlfriend abuse, the Moral Majority

and other thought-provoking questions. Pitchford seems to have tried combining the chemistry of the old James Dean films with that of the Judy Garland-Mickey Rooney musicals.

The movie also generated those questions of improbability. How could a town outlaw rock music and dancing and never be questioned that they're violating the Constitution?

The best thing about the movie is the cast. Bacon, previously of *Diner*, has some great moves and gives a good performance as Ren.

Lithgow tries to be convincing as the fire-and-brimstone preacher, but just doesn't cut it, probably because I don't like fire-and-brimstone preachers.

Singer, of *Fame* fame, was nice to look at and gave the movie some of its more enjoyable moments, but I had trouble with her character. If the minister was so concerned with not letting his daughter dance or listen to rock music because it was immoral then why did he let her dress like the whore of Babylon and wear more makeup than Boy George?

Probably the most enjoyable character in the movie was Willard (Christopher Penn), the only person in Beaumont to befriend Ren. Ren teaching Willard to dance is probably the best part of the entire movie except for the opening credits.

What little dancing there is in the movie is good, but there isn't enough of it. The movie is made out to look like a dance extravaganza, but there's only two good dance scenes. Lynne Taylor-Corbett was the choreographer and did a good job on the few dance scenes there were.

The opening credits are enjoyable — a bunch of feet dancing to Kenny Loggins' driving title song, "Footloose." It makes you want to get up and dance. I wish the rest of the movie was the same way. *Footloose* had the makings of a good movie, but because of its drawbacks, ends up running like a very long MTV video and is about exciting as a rerun of *Solid Gold*.

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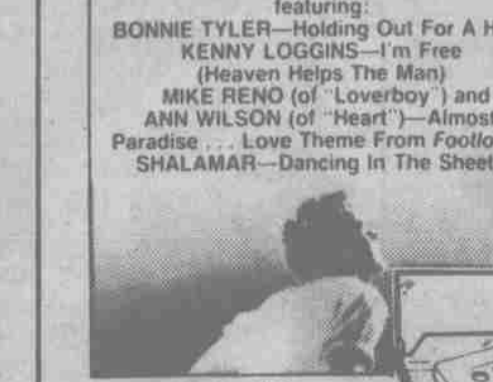
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Television

• The Everly Brothers reunited late last year after a decade-long schism. The result was a very satisfying HBO televised concert, and the promise of new Everly discs. *Everly Brothers' Rock 'n' Roll Odyssey* (8 p.m. on Channel 12) documents the duo's phenomenal career. It is being shown as part of Nebraska ETV's latest fund-raising festival.

At the Sheldon

• *The German Democratic Republic: Toward a New Social Cinema*, a series of films from East Germany, begins a four-night engagement at the Film Theatre today. Two films by Konrad Wolf, *Mama I'm Alive* (7 p.m.) and *Solo Sunday* (9 p.m.), will be screened today.

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At the Kimball

• The Alvin Ailey Dance Company wraps up a three-day stint in the Recital Hall. Numbers tonight include "Suite Otis," "Treading," "Song Without Words" and "Revelations." The show begins at 8 p.m. The box office reports that tickets for tonight's performance are sold out.

Ailey serves it up...

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The music was so quiet, so monotonous in its rhythms that it eventually disappeared from our consideration. The twisting, expanding and contract-

ing, positive and negative shapes of the two bodies captured all attention.

This is a hungry season in Nebraska. We have no Mardi Gras, but we do have one more night of Alvin Ailey. Dig in.

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