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Meli (Mariel Hemingway) confronts Dr. Harry Wolper (Peter O'Toole) with the fact that she has fallen in love with him. Courtesy of Universal Pictures

Moving, entertaining 'Creator' succeeds because of bright humor, good acting

By Tom Mockler
 Staff Reporter

"Creator," currently showing at the Plaza 4, is well worth seeing, unless you happen to be especially cynical. It is one of those entertaining films that one could cry "foul" at because of emotional manipulation in the story. The difference with this film, as opposed to say, "Terms of Endearment," is that it works. This coup is achieved through especially bright

humor and good acting. The story line is involved but coherent. Dr. Harry Wolper (Peter O'Toole), a Nobel laureate biologist, is a brilliant eccentric whose major preoccupation is trying to bring his dead wife back to life even though she's been dead 30 years. Boris Laskin is a first year grad student who is desperately seeking the "right girl." One day on campus he sees Barbara Spencer (Virginia Madsen) and falls in love instantly. She slips away, but Harry knows her identity, and so

blackmails Boris into signing on as his research assistant. While this is going on, Dr. Sidney Kuhlbeck (David Ogden Stiers) is trying to get Harry transferred off the staff, basically because he thinks his eccentricities will get their grant funds cut. Also, a 19-year-old drifter named Meli (Mariel Hemingway) has a run-in with Harry and decides she is going to marry him. The rest of the movie is spent working out these premises.

OK, it sounds kind of silly, but it really does work. Peter O'Toole is in top form, anchoring the film with the sheer charm of his persona. Even when the script is thin, he can be funny or moving, or both. Sometimes he doesn't need to say anything.

Vincent Spano ("Baby, It's You") is also very good as the young man finding his place in the world.

Virginia Madsen ("Electric Dreams") is a delightful puzzle. Since she is arguably the most beautiful woman in the world, it is hard to tell sometimes if she is acting or not. Who cares? Her presence is so natural, it really doesn't matter.

Stiers turns in a solid performance as Harry's scientific nemesis of sorts.

Mariel Hemingway, on the other hand, is becoming a bit tiresome. Even though this character is a comic break for her, she simply is not a comic actress. Actually, it's really not much of a part. In a way, she is overqualified for it.

The humor in the film is consistently warm, and frequently inventive, which is good, because there are spots where you can see it papering over the dramatic shortcomings.

It's worth the admission price.

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