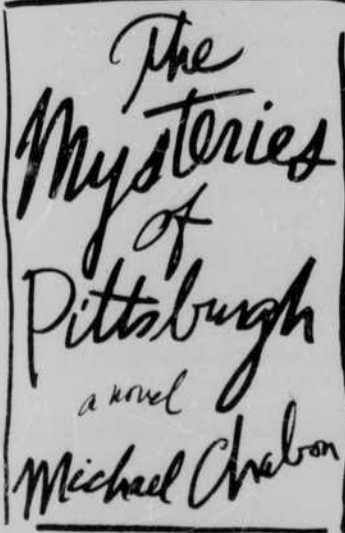


Chabon's first novel is an exception to the rule



Courtesy of William Morrow and Co.
By William Rudolph
Staff Reviewer

Michael Chabon, "The Mysteries of Pittsburgh" (William Morrow and Co.)

First novels always have to overcome a tricky obstacle. They must

not only introduce an author to the world, but also establish the author's first work as something apart from the other masses of books littering the store display. Debut novels usually come across as an odd mixture of roughness and substance while the author tries to find his or her voice.

Book Review

Michael Chabon's first novel, "The Mysteries of Pittsburgh" (Morrow, \$16.95), is the exception to the rule. From the moment the novel opens, Chabon, a recent graduate of the universities of Pittsburgh and California at Irvine, catches the reader in a consistently smooth web of words that seemingly flows on and on while controlling all unnecessary details.

Chabon's narrator is Art Bechstein, just-graduated economics major at the University of Pittsburgh and son of an educated mobster. He's at the end of both his undergraduate career and a year-long affair with his eccentric girl-

See MYSTERIES on 10

Veteran cast can't save dull plot

BAD DREAMS from Page 8

intense performance like his past work in "Re-Animator" as Dr. Alex Karman, a young shrink with a heart that belongs to Cynthia. The members of the therapy group are also great: E.G. Daily (Pee Wee's girlfriend in "Pee Wee's Big Adventure" and the blonde bimbo from "Valley Girl") plays Lana, the noncommuni-

Cameron, Spicoli from TV's "Fast Times at Ridgemont High" rip-off), a self-destructive punker who makes a little hole in his stomach to let all the heavy stuff out. Damita Jo Freeman steals the show as Gilda, a freaked-out space case who follows Cynthia around droning, "You are not of this world."

The script throws in a few classically awful lines. The best of the bunch is police detective Sy Richardson (from the "Repo Man"

soundtrack) questioning Cynthia's part in the Unity Fields suicide pact: "Hell," he snorts, "Maybe she poured the gasoline on the babies' heads!"

While it doesn't have any classic lines on the same par as "Who's going to believe a talking head? Get a job in a sideshow" from "Re-Animator" or "Tina! Bring me the axe!" from "Mommie Dearest," "Bad Dreams" has just enough to seem destined for immortality, big grosses and legions of fans on videocassette.

'Bad Dreams' winds up coming across as more of a cross between 'Re-Animator' and 'Trapper John, M.D.'

cative nutcase who shouldn't have gone swimming on a full stomach. Then there's Miriam (Susan Ruttan, "L.A. Law"), a chain-smoking former tabloid writer; Ed (Louis Giambalvo, last seen as Karen's kidnapper on "Knots Landing"), a horny idiot; Connie (Susan Barnes), Ed's fan and main squeeze; and Ralph (Dean

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