

Exotic character mix fails in 'Bagdad Cafe'

By Lisa Donovan
Staff Reporter

If the movie "Bagdad Cafe" is supposed to be a remake of the "Odd Couple," then Oscar and Felix would be insulted.

movie REVIEW

Percy Aldon's story is about an encounter between a German woman with a cleaning fetish and an exhausted woman who can't find the time to clean, much less raise her two teen-age children and grandchild.

The movie begins with a couple who is speaking, or rather, arguing, in foreign tongue in the middle of the Mojave Desert.

Jasmin (Marianne Sagebrecht), a German hausfrau, leaves her husband right in the middle of the desert. Taking the wrong suitcase and a box of magic tricks, Jasmin takes off walking down the highway.

As she journeys down the road, Jasmin is offered a ride by a man in a pick-up. After she shrugs him off, the man peels off.

In the next scene, that very same man is arriving at a cafe and whadaya know -- he's married to the lady who runs the Bagdad Cafe and Motel.

Coincidentally, the couple, Brenda and Sal, have a battle and Sal ends up leaving.

At this time we are introduced to Brenda and Sal's children, Sal Jr., played by Darron Flagg and Phyllis, played by Monica Calhoun.

Sal Jr. is a down-on-his-luck pianist and his younger sister is a giddy teeny-bopper with overactive hormones.

Next, we meet the others who inhabit the premises: an Indian short-order cook, a tattoo artist and a for-

mer Hollywood set painter.

Rather than an exotic character mix, most of Aldon's characters come together in a most unlikely manner -- too unlikely. And although, at times, it's part of the movie's charm, it takes credibility away from the film.

The film progresses as Jasmin finally arrives at the Bagdad Cafe and decides she will check into the motel and stay awhile. While Jasmin is experiencing life in America and the new culture, the rest of the cast experiences Jasmin.

With some frequent humor and rather touching scenes, Jasmin and Brenda experience the trials and tribulations that those foreign to one another and those things which eventual friends experience.

The two figure out that although they are very different people, they are sharing a lot of the same things: personal liberation, responsibility, family, love and friendship.

The only thing that really ties the film together is the music. Jearlyn Steele-Battle sings a high-pitched crie "I am calling."

The line, combined with a panning of the desert, left a lonely but hopeful feeling. This was a transitional element used to show the women's progression. Although the plot is original and refreshing, the execution is far from brilliant.

The movie is really mediocre, but it teaches a lesson of acceptance and the beauty of personhood.

If nothing else, the story allows a person to become attached to Jasmin and Brenda's likability and vulnerability. Society has stereotyped "beautiful" with surface adjectives and this film attempts to deny this.

An example is the exposition of Jasmin. She is overweight and most

See BAGDAD on 14



Courtesy of the Sheldon Film Theater

CCH Pounder and Marianne Sagebrecht

G N'R Lies' stinks of sex, profanity, drugs, violence

GUNS from Page 12

Uh oh. Have Guns n' Roses weened out?

Nah. Maniacs will enjoy the sentimental "Used to Love Her," which goes, "I used to love her, but I had to kill her." These lyrics are just nifty on top of the acoustic strumming in the background.

Also, a remake of "You're Crazy" is even stranger. This song was one of the better tunes off the band's last album except this time it's acoustic, of course. This song is fairly mellow also, yet takes grand prize in the use-of-profanity category just like the other version.

Vocalist W. Axl Rose is not someone you want your mother to listen to if you would like to keep your albums around for long.

The other two songs, "Patience" and "One in a Million" are both solid tunes, a little sentimental for most Guns n' Roses fans, but showing a little diversity.

This band has tricks up its sleeve. The mellow tracks are interesting, the live stuff is refreshing.

Sex, drugs, and violence are what these guys feed on, and their innovative cover shows this parasitic love for the wild.

It looks like a National Enquirer and the headlines are at least as entertaining. "Gay Vicar In Gangbang Horror" and "Grandma Batters Baby Basher" are some typical Guns n' Roses ideals, huh?

And somebody answer this question: "Is that ex-porn princess Traci Lords lying nude on the album cover?"

Hint: She has been seen with Slash.

By the way, for all you rumor lovers, here is some vital information. The whole band is still alive. Nobody has overdosed, died of AIDS, gotten drunk and wrecked a car, or jumped out any windows.

They did take the drummer of Faster Pussycat, tape him up and leave him in an elevator, though.

Boy, everybody in the music world ought to love these guys. They are so amiable. They even like

acoustic music.

Overall, this album is not quite as strong as "Appetite For Destruction," but all hard core Guns n' Roses fans are going to have to buy it. It's definitely worth a spin on the old turntable of death.

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