



Courtesy of MGM Pictures

Renee Witherspoon and Jason London star in "The Man in the Moon," a coming-of-age drama about teenage love.

Movie overrates first love



"The Man in the Moon"



Mark Baldrige
Staff Reporter

What's the biggest problem with "Romeo and Juliet"? Its biggest problem is that the "undying love" of two kids who hardly know each other is not really all that important. Give them a day or two together and they'll find reasons to hate one another.

"The Man in the Moon" (Cinema Twin) has the same problem. It tries to solve it in the same way, too: In order for the story to seem as important to adults as it does to the kids involved, someone has to die.

Death, it appears, is significant at any age.

"Romeo and Juliet" has some pretty good writing going for it.

"The Man in the Moon" doesn't.

What it does have is a lot of stuff happening at once. In one film you get first kiss, first love (three different times), first sexual experience, birth and death — the last three within in a couple of days. Sound exciting? It is. But it's a little much.

The movie offers high-quality performances and realistic, complex family relationships. When it strays from that, it strays too far.

The story follows the sexual awakening of Dani, a 14-year-old girl. She develops a crush on the new boy in town, Court, who's 17.

It seems inevitable that Court will, in turn, fall for Dani's older sister, Maureen. He does, in a scene full of goggle eyes and "love at first sight" glances. Dani is disgusted, as we are.

Anyone who's had a friend (and Dani and Maureen have been friends till now) muscle in on his or her romantic territory will recognize immediately the feelings involved.

Suddenly everyone seems far too happy. And it's as if they purchase their bliss at Dani's expense.

Court treats her as if she's done something wrong, Maureen just acts guilty. It's a terrible way to spend a summer.

And maybe it's not so great a way to spend two hours in the dark either.

The setting is the indeterminate South of the 1950s. It's hard to tell if we're supposed to be in East Texas or somewhere in Georgia. Everyone talks with a different kind of accent. Maybe they come from all over.

There are all kinds of sub-plots going on — too many. There's an awful lot of suppressed sex too, which is all right except it doesn't explain how anything like "true love" could develop in this environment.

This film makes the familiar mistake of believing that because first love seems so pure and so life-altering, it really is.

But isn't it true, and don't we all know, that love is rare? That it never "just happens?"

Soapdish

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romance he's ever had. Ally Sheedy is the love interest, a creative mortuary cosmetician.

As appealing as Candy is, the real attraction of this film is Maureen O'Hara's return to the big screen. She's a scene stealer as Candy's Irish mother, who wants nothing more than to keep her boy tied to her apron

strings. Mama has a love interest of her own in Anthony Quinn, although it's an uphill battle for him.

"Only the Lonely" was produced by John Hughes, the creator of previous Candy vehicles "Planes, Trains and Automobiles" and "Uncle Buck." As is typical in Hughes' films, the setting is Chicago. James Belushi makes a cameo appearance. (Available tomorrow)

"Toy Soldiers" (R) It's odd that this week's only film about teenagers

is rated R, mostly for its violence.

Similar to "Taps," this one takes place in a military academy.

The "Toy Soldiers" are students at the academy, whose school is taken over by terrorists.

Louis Gossett Jr. is again in uniform as the headmaster. The toy soldiers include "Star Trek: The Next Generation's" Wil Wheaton and teen heartthrobs Sean Astin and Keith Coogan. (Available tomorrow)

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Reviews



U2 reverts to passions that captured college fans



Courtesy of Island Records

"Achtung Baby"

U2
Island Records

On "Under A Blood Red Sky," an aural postcard from their 1983 North American tour, it was evident that the Irish rock band U2 was on the verge of something big.

Selling out arenas across the continent, U2 created a buzz of excitement for its passionate music and the amazing release it provided band and fan alike.

On that album, vocalist Bono would often scat and shout out, "One! Two! All right! Here we go!" during inappropriate times, countering against the cool detachment that was concert protocol during the 1980s.

Somehow, the idea of these guys not really caring if they came off a bit uncool endeared them to audiences. At least 10 million people felt that way, and U2 is now one of the biggest bands on Earth.

Along the way, this band has alienated almost as many fans as they've won over, and for hard reasons: They were college darlings. It's true that when something secret and personal is revealed to the world, it becomes less wonderful, and that's what U2 experienced in the late 1980s.

Longtime fans felt that U2 had

become a parody of themselves, catering to what the world wanted instead of following its own vision.

In actuality, Bono, bassist Adam Clayton, guitarist Edge and drummer Larry Mullen pursued their collective passion all across the musical map. They found success, keeping a reluctant eye on what their fans wanted — a difficult but inevitable passage.

With "Achtung Baby," they deliberately have returned to the bleak, wintry imagery of their watershed LP, "War." It's a welcome change from their excellent but overtly Messianic records of late, where they danced dangerously close to the flame of self-righteousness.

Instead of passionate, anthemic exercises in signature sound, U2 has opted for deeply personal, often twisted songs that purposefully undermine the mighty band-with-a-vision image.

In particular, tracks like "Light My Way" and "Who's Gonna Ride Your Wild Horses" use soaring melodies subdued to restrict the majestic levels normally found in U2 songs. It is a relief that they can be humble in their instrumentation, and the songs still work beautifully.

We now have Bono's angelic, wounded-sounding voice floating about while Edge, Clayton and Mullen jam away like ex-Parliament Funkadelic members.

A very telling song is the calm, steady "Ultraviolet (Light My Way)," one of the best love songs of the bunch.

The song's idea of a sensual, unseen force as a guide to salvation expressed with such happy resignation suggests both hope and hopelessness. Much like the enigmatic band that wrote the song.

U2 hasn't found what it's looking for. Still. But may they always be so happily, assuredly lost in their search.

— Paul Winner

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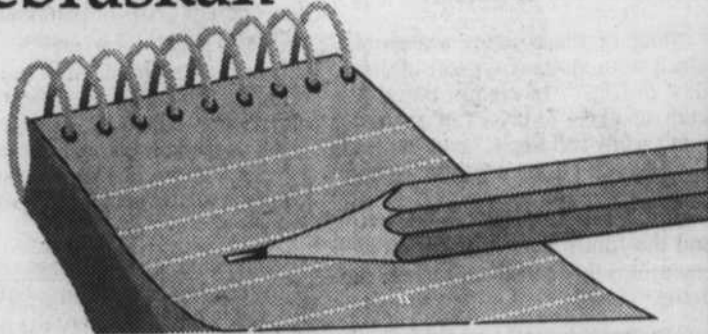
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