

Only You

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sympathy that she has shown in previous films, such as "Untamed Heart." While she does not do a bad job, her acting is less than remarkable.

Robert Downey Jr. plays Peter Wright, the Boston shoe salesman who falls for Faith and claims a pseudonym in order to try to win her. Downey plays the same doe-eyed "look at me, I'm sensitive, really" guy that he played in "Heart and Souls" and "Chaplin."

Supporting actors Bonnie Hunt, Joaquim De Almeida, Fisher Stevens and Billy Zane do little else but feed lines to the leads. Hunt and De Almeida add a subplot of mutual attraction as Kate and Giovanni respond to the heat of passion, and De Almeida's character treats Kate much as his character in "Clear and Present Danger" did.

The redeeming qualities of the film that save it from the depths of perdition are the direction of Norman Jewison and the cinematography of Sven Nykvist.

While not up to the standards of "In the Heat of the Night" or "A Soldier's Story," Jewison attempts, and fails, to capture the same romantic comedy spirit of "Moonstruck."

Nykvist shows his considerable skill in lighting and the use of color to accentuate certain scenes. He is a talented director of photography whose credits include "What's Eating Gilbert Grape," "Chaplin" and "Sleepless in Seattle."

While on the surface this is a nice, enjoyable, romantic comedy for a boring weekend night, the lack of weight of acting hurts it. What does more damage is the cliched snap resolution of everything at the end.

MUSIC REVIEWS



"Full-Empty"
The Judybats
Sire/Warner Bros.
Grade: B

For most new bands, the art of creating a solid debut album is not an easy task. Suddenly, "if at first you don't succeed" becomes more harsh reality than fiction.

Artists including Lincoln hero Matthew Sweet and Toad the Wet Sprocket were able to rebound from pathetic debut efforts and release impressive sophomore albums.

Such is the case with the Tennessee quartet The Judybats, who may have hit paydirt with their fourth release, "Full-Empty." Although the band's debut album, "Native Son," raised a number of college radio eyebrows, the band could not help sounding as if it had just received their shiny new guitars and drums the previous Christmas.

Now, times have changed. The Judybats have grown up, and in turn released a fine alternative album. The sound is crisp, loud and solid, thanks mostly to a recent lineup change that brought in an element missing from other albums: a strong lead guitar.

All of this has been done without sacrificing what The Judybats truly are — acoustic guitar alternative pop.

Chief songwriter Jeff Heiskell continues to explore the rocky side of love and relationships on "Full-Empty," but instead of finding a nice corner in which to curl up and die, Heiskell has chosen to give love the middle finger.

"Are you miserable? Are your demons tangible? / Can we tie them down and question their sincerity? / Hey, could you cop that pained expression once again for camera three?"

On the song "Stupid Cute" Heiskell finds the courage to make fun of himself in the wake of lost love.

"You turned me stupid cute / When you gave me the boot for another."

With bad weather on the way, you might as well be locked indoors with some decent music. If your alternative music palate finds a Counting Crows/Lemonheads sound more acceptable than Nine Inch Nails/Smashing Pumpkins, then The Judybats "Full-Empty" would be money well spent.

— Michael Lehr



Big Head Todd & The Monsters
"Strategem"
Giant Records
Grade: A-

Those who caught on to Big Head Todd after the success of the single "Bittersweet" may be turned off by "Strategem."

There's no track as hummable, likeable and gripping as "Bittersweet" was on their last CD, "Sister Sweetly." While "Sister Sweetly" had some of the best rock moments of last year, there were parts of the disc you couldn't help but skip over. That's not the case, however, on "Strategem."

"Strategem" is a definitive album. In order to appreciate such a release, you have to listen to it entirely. A more mellow release than "Sister Sweetly," "Strategem" never really fully rocks. Instead, the group relies more on subtle guitar riffs and introspective lyrics.

Their lyrics touch on familiar Big Head Todd subjects: yearning,

isolation and failing relationships. In their liner notes, the band said their verses were attempts at "koans." They identified a koan as a Buddhist meditation aimed at emptying the mind of thoughts. Tracks such as "In the Morning" and the title track achieve their attempts at koanage perfectly.

The only problem with such a cohesive release is that some of the songs sound identical to each other. "Strategem" does, however, reward the listener with repeated listens. Given two or three listens, "Strategem" sounds better by the minute.

"Strategem" was recorded at the Boulder Theater, an area where Big Head Todd feels most comfortable. Their comfort shows throughout the disc.

Most of the tracks were recorded live. Most of the songs on the disc will fit perfectly into their live shows. If you ever have a chance to see these guys live, do so, sell plasma and do a Harris study if you have to.

Guitarist and vocalist Todd Park Mohr, bassist Rob Squires and drummer Brian Nevin sound like a true band on this release. All of the rhythms compliment each other. This is a great release to take on a very long bike ride or drive through open country.

— Sean McCarthy

Jason

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His little brother, Joshua (Bokeem Woodbine), has just been released from prison, and like his father, Joshua is resentful against the entire world, including his own family.

Meanwhile, Jason falls in love with

Lyric (Jada Pinkett), a woman who wakes him up to things he had never thought of before, such as birds, sunsets and getting naked by a lake.

Problems are compounded when Lyric's half-brother Alonzo brings Joshua into the world of high-stakes crime by including him in his group of cronies for a bank heist.

Let's sum up; good kid has chance

to leave with his dream woman — and EVERYONE is telling him to leave — but he feels that he should stay to help his family, and there's also the intrusion of the criminal element into everyone's lives.

Hasn't all of this been done before?

The ending is very violent, which actually adds an element of reality,

but still ends tied up in the metaphorical bow.

The commercials for "Jason's Lyric" make the movie look like it is a love story, but the relationship is given very little development beyond the way Lyric makes Jason feel.

Yippee. Hoorah. Can we try something different please?

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