

'Clueless' is teenagers, movies at their worst

The Facts

Movie: "Clueless"
Director: Amy Heckerling
Stars: Alicia Silverstone, Brittany Murphy, Paul Rudd
Rating: PG-13
Grade: C-
Five Words: Sorta funny, but mostly annoying

By Joel Strauch
 Editor

Director Amy Heckerling had her timing right when she brought us "Fast Times at Ridgemont High," but with her latest release, she seems pretty "Clueless."

In "Fast Times," the characters seemed real — people you could picture at your own high school (in a twisted, frightening sort of way).

But in "Clueless," about the only thing that's believable at all is the pretentiousness that the popular students have around almost everywhere else.

These kids make the Beverly Hills 90210 snobs look like Serbian refugees.

In fact, the movie does take place in Beverly Hills. But even with the glimmering backdrop, the plotline develops worse than exposed film.

A rich, way popular young woman named Cher (Alicia Silverstone, "The Crush"), takes it upon herself to selflessly adopt the new transfer student Tai (Brittany

Murphy) and make her over into one of the 'way' populars.

She gives Tai instructions on how to dress, how to exercise and what boys to chase after, but Tai turns out to have ideas of her own (which at first, seems quite incredible).

Attempts are made to inflate the flat storyline: a new romantic interest for Cher, Cher's struggling efforts to obtain a driver's license and by the presence of her ex-stepbrother Josh (Paul Rudd), who serves as a human-interest mentor for Cher.

The acting is almost as pitiful as the limited premise.

Silverstone, who gained her popularity as "the chick in the Aerosmith videos," can't breathe any life into the empty shell of the one-dimensional Cher.

But it's not entirely her fault. Writer (as well as director) Heckerling must have been out sick when valley girl talk died — and nobody bothered to forward her the message.

Cher's vocabulary style (or lack thereof) makes Beavis and Butthead look like Lisa Simpson.

The other characters don't do much to add substance to the flick. The roles are either too limited or equally asinine.

"Clueless" is not without its humorous moments. But they can't outweigh the uglier aspects of this apathy-ridden movie.

Rent "Fast Times at Ridgemont High" instead.

Films of all shapes, sizes at Great Plains Film Festival

By Chad Johnson
 Staff Reporter

From the July 18th to the 30th, The Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater will be hosting the third Great Plains Film Festival.

This biannual event was originally started as an opportunity to showcase the films and filmmakers of the Great Plains region of the U.S. and Canada.

Based on the regional festivals like the Northwest Film Festival in Portland, Oregon, the GPF offers "a venue for film and videomakers in the Great Plains," according to Dan Ladely, director of the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater.

Mr. Ladely also said the goals of the festival are to generate interest from filmmakers, distributors and viewers.

"The filmmakers response has been wonderful," Ladely said, "I was told once by a filmmaker 'If Van Gogh would have had the equivalent of the GPF, he wouldn't have cut off his ear.'"

The distributors have also been very active in contacting the Ross after the festival in order to locate and sign new filmmakers and give them an opportunity to work with bigger budgets and reach a wider audience, Ladely said.

"The hardest thing to do is build an audience," Ladely said, adding that films and filmmakers entered in the festival are largely ignored because they are not from New York or Los Angeles, but are usually very personal, regionally-oriented films that

are a nice change of pace from the slick packaged, mass-market, mainstream Hollywood film.

Some of the highlights of the festival include a panel discussion, "Opportunities and Obstacles for Independent Production in the Great Plains."

Panelists include moderator Doug Boyd, public assistance specialist for television and film for the city of Lincoln; Mary Ethel Emmanuel, Nebraska State Film Officer; Mel Bucklin, documentary filmmaker; and Jerry Aronson, documentary filmmaker and film instructor at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

Eight different awards are up for grabs at the Great Plains Film Festival, including Best Film Made for Public Television, Best Dramatic Feature, Best Documentary Feature, the Nebraska Humanities Council Award and the Rainbow award.

The Rainbow award started out as an award for Native American artists, "probably the last minority to get involved with film and video production," Ladely said.

The award has been expanded to include other racial and ethnic minorities, women, people with disabilities, people with alternative lifestyles and people without easy access to the film and video industry.

The Rainbow award was created to "call attention to disfranchised artists in regions that don't have easy access to facilities like people in New York and California have," Ladely said.

"Hopefully, someday there will no

longer be a need for the Rainbow Award."

This year, 56 films were entered in the festival. A panel of judges in the local area viewed each film so that all of the films were screened five times.

Of the initial 56 films entered, 32 scored enough points to advance to the final round of competition. The finalist panel consists of three judges who are selected as "professionals involved with, and knowledgeable about, the art of the moving image."

The judges were asked to grade the films based on content regardless of budget, and to evaluate the film or filmmaker's relationship with the Great Plains.

This year, the cost of a "Festival Pass" has been lowered in order to generate more interest in the festival as a whole and to get more people to attend more films, Ladely said.

There is no admission charge for the panel discussion on the 22nd or the Awards Ceremony on the 28th, and all events scheduled during the festival are open to the public.

The festival passes are \$10 and available at the Ross Film Theater, otherwise each night of viewing is \$5.50, \$4.50 for students and \$3.50 for senior citizens, children and members of the Friends of the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater.

Anyone tired of Hollywood megafilms and wanting something more personal and local should attend, Ladely said.

"I can't encourage people enough to come," Ladely said.

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