

'The Truth About Cats and Dogs' requires a date

By Cliff Hicks
Film Critic

There was one major problem with "The Truth About Cats and Dogs" — I couldn't get a date for it.

Movie Review



This is the essence of a good date film, one of the best in a long time. It has comedy, romance and is just generally a heck of a lot of fun to watch. Try to bring a date, though, or you'll walk out wishing someone was holding your hand.

It's a twist on the classic "Cyrano de Bergerac" story, with Abby Barnes (Janeane Garofalo) playing the Cyrano type, except for the fact that Abby doesn't have a large nose.

She just considers herself plain, not tall and blonde. But she is, like Cyrano, sharp, witty and intelligent.

Noelle (Uma Thurman) is tall and blonde, however. She's also rather naive and is honestly trying to better herself. Her relationships, however, are nothing but trouble with anyone. She's a model and her current abusive boyfriend also happens to be her manager.

Abby, a veterinarian, has a radio talk show called "The Truth About Cats and Dogs" where she dispenses witty and useful pet advice to callers.

Enter Brian (Ben Chaplin), a photographer who has a problem with a Great Dane on roller skates. With Abby's help, he de-skates the dog, which he decides to keep and names Hank.

He asks Abby if he can meet her, and she considers actually going through with it — until he asks what she looks like, so he can find her at the meeting place. Abby gives a description that fits Noelle and skips the meeting.

Ben is persistent, however, and shows up at

The Facts

Film: "The Truth About Cats and Dogs"
Stars: Janeane Garofalo, Ben Chaplin, Uma Thurman
Director: Michael Lehmann
Rating: PG-13 (language, adult themes)
Grade: A-
Five Words: "Cyrano" story gets new twist

work. Luckily, Noelle is visiting this day and ... you can see it coming, can't you?

Garofalo is marvelous. Her character is fully developed and believable. She could be the girl (or guy, figuratively speaking) in the hall you never really look at for long, but are always glad to know once you do. It's just generally delightful to watch her on screen. Her comic timing is precise, her attitude is likable yet humorous — she proves that talent is one thing she has plenty of.

Chaplin is excellent as well. In his American debut, he steps into the shoes filled by so many other romantic heroes. He, too, is human and not some perfect ideal.

Every guy I talked to who was at the preview agreed with me that they too have felt like that at times. Chaplin captures the feelings of all men who have had women troubles.

Thurman's semi-shallow model is also convincing. Rather than make her completely a stereotype, there are a lot of elements that bring her into the real person.

One of the many great things about this film is that it's not some extraordinary story or something completely far-fetched. These are real events that could happen to any of us ... if only they would.

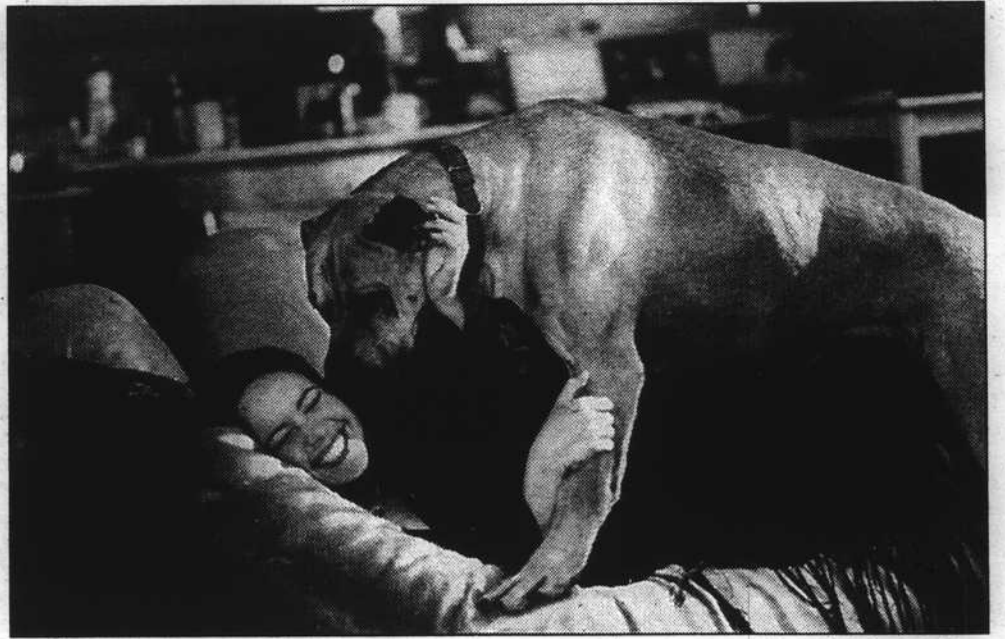


Photo courtesy of Twentieth Century Fox

Janeane Garofalo gets some good lovin' from Hank, the Great Dane, in the new romantic comedy "The Truth About Cats and Dogs."

Hank, the Great Dane, is also simply hysterical. He honestly is the biggest supporting character in the film. There are points where he simply steals the show.

Like any good comedy, many of the jokes last after you leave the film, especially the "When Harry Met Sally"-esque scene on the telephone.

"The Truth About Cats & Dogs" mixes a good amount of thinking humor with a little bit of slapstick humor, and maintains the interest in the relationship the whole film.

Perhaps the film's only flaw was the fact that there really was nothing unattractive with Abby to begin with. With Steve Martin's "Roxanne" or the original "Cyrano," the nose was obvious. Abby has none. I'm nitpicking, though.

Even if you can't get a date for the film, it's still one worth seeing. Maybe several times. Heck I'd go see it again, if you're really desperate for a date (you'd have to be to ask me).

As every Cyrano-like story proves, it's not the surface that counts. And the voice you can't see is always more romantic than the face you don't know ...

Collages make up art show

By Patrick Hambrecht
Senior Reporter

Sexy photo collages of oiled and tanned male nudes are featured along with silly sentimental paintings crammed with roses in Gary Pummel's show "My Life — An Introspective Exhibit of Recent Work."

Pummel's show will be on display at Gallery Nine, 124 S. Ninth St., until May 3.

Businesses like Yoplait Yogurt, Bride Magazine and Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus have hired Pummel as a commercial artist for his fine eye for detail and realistic figure painting. He now works at the Lincoln Journal Star.

Pummel strictly divides his interests, featuring a stoic, classic appreciation for male beauty only in his collages, and then a dandified American appreciation for old carousel horses, frilly fabric, flowers, cute doggies, ceramic Mr. Moons and other whimsical junk that might be found at some old lady's house.

Two of Pummel's collages exemplify his cool, alabaster sense of male homo-eroticism. An enormous naked idol lifts a ball high into the air, backed by a white pyramid in "Night Dreams: A Truth Revealed." In a more irreverent piece, "Pucker up and blow," the bulging g-string of a headless man is cooled by an electric fan while wild horses stampede in the background.

His paintings, on the other hand, are infused with a resentful sorrow behind the portrait smiles and suburban bric-a-brac.

Two awkward middle-aged men stand in a thick forest, grinning sadly. Surrounded by thick roses and rich greens, the forest becomes grayer and uglier in the background. The facial expressions of both men seem forced and forlorn, as they stare expectantly toward whatever lurks to the right of the painting.

Gallery Nine is open Wednesday to Saturday from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. and Sunday from 12 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is free.

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