

# 'Love and Death' suffers from weak ending

BY BARB CHURCHILL  
Film Critic

"Love and Death on Long Island" is a very unusual film. It's a cross between a man in mid-life crisis and a tribute to the wonders of pop culture. The problem with this film lies in the mingling between the two concepts.

Giles De'Ath, played by John Hurt, is a writer of serious literature. He hates technology, women and most people. De'Ath's life has been the same ever since his wife's death; he writes at the same time every day, listens to his old-fashioned crystal radio every evening, and meals and bed-times remain doggedly on schedule. De'Ath lives in isolation, and is so out-of-touch that he thinks his crystal radio is the latest in technology.

But there is trouble in paradise. De'Ath is bored, and wants to shake things up. He wanders down to the

local theater to watch a movie adaptation of an E.M. Forster's novel. "Love and Death" being a comedy, obviously De'Ath doesn't see any Forster film; instead, De'Ath sees "Hotpants College 2."

It had been 20 years since he'd last seen any movie at all, and De'Ath is taken by the acting of teenage heart throb Ronnie Bostock, played by Jason Priestley.

To feed his newfound crush, De'Ath goes hog-wild for all sorts of new technology. He buys a VCR, not knowing he also needs a television set to view movies. He buys the TV, a new answering machine, tells his housekeeper to keep a less regimented schedule and decides to travel. De'Ath's destination: Long Island, home of Ronnie Bostock.

When he reaches Long Island, the previously-sedentary De'Ath becomes an active sleuth. He figures out where Bostock lives, even though

his address and phone number are of course unlisted, and manages to meet Bostock's live-in girlfriend Audrey, played by Fiona Loewi. Audrey becomes taken with De'Ath, and introduces him to Bostock. She later lives to regret that, because Audrey discovers what De'Ath doesn't know himself. De'Ath has fallen in love with Bostock.

Hurt does an excellent job as De'Ath, a man who changes from an old codger who hates the modern world and everything in it to a man who's enchanted by the new opportunities in film, literature and technology the future has brought to life. Priestley is fine as Bostock, an actor who's well aware he's made it solely on his looks, and is desperate to prove he can actually act. The role of Audrey, Bostock's girlfriend, could easily have been a throwaway part in the hands of anyone other than Fiona Loewi. She makes the best of a mar-

ginal part by being supportive, creative, kind and wise.

Kwiatkowski's direction is good, giving life not only to "Love and Death" but also the fictional "Hotpants College 2." Kwiatkowski obviously enjoys films of all types, including the sophomoric genre films such as "Porky's," "National Lampoon's" and "Animal House" that "Hotpants College 2" represents.

The problem with "Love and Death" is in the final 20 minutes. Before then, the film is excellent in its depiction of a man in search of the new, the novel and the unexplained. To De'Ath, everything in the modern world is a novelty, as he has shunned it for many, many years. This naive belief in technology is refreshing.

However, the movie strains credibility when De'Ath becomes enamored with Bostock. De'Ath is an English intellectual who's also been widowed for quite some time. It is

## The Facts

**Film:** "Love and Death on Long Island"  
**Stars:** John Hurt, Jason Priestley, Fiona Loewi  
**Director:** Richard Kwiatkowski  
**Rated:** PG  
**Grade:** B  
**Five Words:** Pretentious writer discovers technology, films

inconceivable that De'Ath wouldn't realize what his sexual orientation was, or that he actually was in love with Bostock, until he blurts it out.

"Love and Death in Long Island" is, overall, a good film that provokes thought and inspires the viewer to a new lease on life.

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