

Poor script makes for overcrowded 'Beach'

By Mike Callahan Jr.
Staff writer

I could hear the annoying pubescent girls the instant I got out of my truck. What could be more exhilarating for a group of teeny-bopper girls on a Friday night than sneaking into dream-boat Leonardo DiCaprio's latest R-rated work, "The Beach."

Oh, yeah — I was stoked to look at a shirtless Leo for two hours, while my girlfriend's opinion of my looks were buried in the sand.

My attitude problem aside, director Danny Boyle has crafted a visually stunning, but sometimes downright weird, adaptation of Alex Garland's acclaimed novel, "The Beach."

Delivering a unique cross between "The Blue Lagoon" and "Lord of the Flies," Leonardo is first to grace the big screen playing Richard, a laid-back, stylish American backpacker who has obviously dropped out of school to "suck in new experiences."

One of those experiences creates an odd opening scene where Richard is challenged by a Bangkok local to drink snake blood.

Attempting to make a statement for the bravery of American tourists, Richard takes the challenge. And I almost threw up.

From the opening scene on, a whirlwind of plot bulkiness emerges. At his cockroach-infested hotel in Bangkok, Richard makes a couple of essential encounters. The first is with his neighbors to the left, a young French couple, Etienne (Guillaume Canet) and Francoise (Virginie Ledoyen). The latter is Richard's future love bunny. Lucky him.

His second encounter is with his neighbor to the right, Daffy (Robert Carlyle), a kooky Scottish character. The odd duck, Daffy, passes on a map to Richard that he claims will lead Richard to a hidden island. So, after a bit of traveling and a routine swim through shark-infested water, Richard and the French couple find paradise — or so they think.

After fleeing from some ruthless marijuana crop growers on the opposite side of the island upon arrival, they finally find "The Beach."

With its 20 or more hippie-like inhabitants comes a secret community that eats fish, plays volleyball and smokes enough weed to convince Frank Stallone he can act. Oh, and they have a lot of sex.

Throughout it all, writer John Hodge is far too bulky in plot, trying to tell about five stories at one time.

And victim to that problem is the characters in the film. Little is shed on

REVIEW The Beach

STARRING: Leonardo DiCaprio, Virginie Ledoyen, Guillaume Canet
DIRECTOR: Danny Boyle
RATED: R
GRADE: C
FIVE WORDS: Stellar scenery saves bulky plot.

the personality of any of the characters. The exception is Richard, who drastically goes from an easy-going traveler to a post-traumatic stress boy who convinces himself he's at war in Vietnam.

For no apparent reason, Richard goes out of his mind for about 30 minutes before the closing scenes. But despite how strangely his part was written, Leonardo pulled it off nicely. If only the other actors were given a chance to really act, then maybe the film would swim into our emotions.

What becomes of paradise is quite depressing yet blatantly inevitable.

After a few tourists that Richard left a map for arrive on the island, the Thai marijuana farmers shoot them to death. Immediately following those shootings, the farmers storm to the hippie village and demand the travelers leave, claiming the marijuana farm is in danger because of all the people discovering



the island. Duh.

The most disappointing thing about the film is the attempted love story. In the love scene, with the moonlight reflecting onto Rich and Francoise, the camera techniques are awesome, but the sex is pointless. The chemistry between the couple is non-existent. Much of the problem is because of two things: Francoise's poor English and her battle for dialogue among the many plots.

Technically, the film is stellar. Darius Khondji's camera techniques are a thing of beauty, and I really dug the "God's View" camera when it was in effect. Surfing throughout the film

musically is hard-hitting, UK-style techno music. The suspense created by this rapid-paced soundtrack is fitting.

The moral of the story, or stories, is that paradise is only possible at heart. No matter where you live, or how you live, nothing is perfect. Including "The Beach."

Though they did try and cram too much plot for 120 minutes, the film does manage to be pretty entertaining and a little intriguing.

As much as I hate to admit it, I was impressed with Leonardo DiCaprio. But it took a good 30 minutes to get that "Leo glow" off my girlfriend's face. Oh, and by the way, Virginie Ledoyen is hot.

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Legendary band to show reggae roots

REGGAE from page 7

"The punks in England really identified with it," Van Pelt said. "Culture is a band that punk-rock people will know about."

In 1982, the group broke up, and Hill recorded a solo album under Culture's name. But Hill's solo career would be relatively short-lived, as the band reformed in 1986.

Since then, Culture has been recording and touring steadily. In 1992 Kenneth Dayes left the band and was replaced by Talford Nelson.

Afrine Hill has also joined the group as a back-up vocalist.

Despite these changes, Hill said the group has always been conventional.

"We've never differed from our roots. We've kept an authentic sound," Hill said.

At the same time, Culture has also been hailed for keeping up with current themes.

But as change comes, tradition still sticks.

"We still do a lot of teaching for the youths, too," Hill said.

"We've never differed from our roots."

Joseph Hill
Culture band leader

Culture is also known for its energetic stage presence. Hill said the live show is "fiery, full of fire. Out of the fire comes our purity."

Van Pelt agreed. "Joseph Hill is really one of the most energetic performers. You really are riveted by watching him."

Culture has been on its American tour for about three weeks, and it plans to continue on for another eight or nine.

With a rich and fervent tone, Hill gave a message to those who will attend the show.

"Get Ready! Grease your lips to laugh, wash your hands to clap them, open your hearts to make good joy, for Culture is coming."

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