

Unbelievable plot, mistakes hurt movie

MISTAKES from B4

to run a play.

- The endzone of the team's stadium alternates between painted and unpainted, sometimes in the same game.
- The Thanksgiving game is not played against Dallas in Dallas but Washington. Uh-huh.
- Reeves talks about quicksand in reference to getting sacked.
- The movie suspends our belief by allowing a former pro to play while he's still in prison. Then, he gets arrested for a bar brawl, which would be a violation of his special furlough, but he stays out. And though he's a former pro star, the announcers seem befuddled by his presence, generally unaware of who

he is.

- Fifty or so seconds are run off the clock when a Washington player recovers a onside kick, which of course couldn't happen, because a recovered onside is a dead ball.
- Furthermore, Reeves' character wouldn't need to call a timeout to stop a clock that's already stopped.
- In one scene, Washington is on the 20. Then the 5. Then the 40. And a play hasn't actually been run.
- In another play, Reeves is on the sidelines and the huddle at the same time.
- This is professional football, but each team only has one quarterback, so when the starter crosses the picket line to play, Reeves must simply quit and

retire to the boat.

- Several players suddenly switch from offense to defense in the middle of one game.
- There is a deaf and mute player on the team. In one scene, he is spotted having a conversation with a teammate.
- Must we go on? "The Replacements" cares nothing for simple details that could've been caught by a neophyte in the film industry.
- Never mind that the movie has an endless number of shots of the cheerleaders' dancing, and the players sing "I Will Survive" three times.
- To their credit, the three scenes in which the song is employed does deal, in fact, with survival. For that, half a star. 1/2★

Camerawork, Ryder make 'Autumn' worth seeing

BY SAMUEL MCKEOWN

I was born last week, not yesterday. So when MGM asserts that its movie "Autumn in New York," starring Winona Ryder and Richard Gere, wasn't screened for critics so the ending wouldn't be divulged, I smelled the rat.

Typically, most screened flicks belong in the trash bin of the industry, the real turkey.

"Autumn" is a turkey, though not in the awful way that, say, "Battlefield Earth" was. Rather, it's cheap and manipulative, a bit funny when it should be weepy.

And yet I sorta recommend it, maybe because the emotional carnage is built up so high by the end that it's engaging on some level.

What do you judge a film upon - what you know it does or doesn't do well, or how you feel about it? I side with the latter philosophy, and this movie hits a few of my soft spots, as I'm a sucker for good shots of New York and well, the doe-eyed Ryder.

This is not one of her finer performances - a young hat designer named Charlotte who falls for much, much older playboy Will Keane (Gere) and tells him the sad truth of her weird heart tumor illness that leaves her with little time to live.

But "Autumn" isn't her film to carry and so she's a wise choice to cast in it. The movie immediately brightens the moment her chewed-up crewcut enters the screen.

Her cute peppiness in the face of death balances Gere's grimace acting that he's employed for as long as I've seen him. He is a poor emotional actor, incapable of getting angry or sad without its seeming funny, and so the final scenes, when Charlotte's fate hangs on a risky surgery, are not the best.

Neither is the story, which isn't a whole lot different from Gere's other movies - Gere and girl meet, Gere whispers sweet nothings, Gere screws something up because he's still a playboy, Gere makes up.

The illness is a new twist, and Ryder doesn't exactly look sick, well, ever. Her seizures, if that's what they're called, require her to faint.

There is one curve ball in the script, a subplot of sorts. It's a good one - it carries over the dead spots of Will and Charlotte's relationship. Considering Gere's reputation, it ought to be a subject for a smarter, more serious movie than "Autumn in New York."

At least the title aptly fits, and actress-turned-director Joan Chen (the wife in "The Last Emperor") has a strong instinct for the camera. Her talent almost exceeds what this movie is capable of, with fluid camera movements, and nice plays of shadows and colors.

One shot looks curiously like a Monet painting; another presents one of the better shots of water I've seen in some time.

As reviews have trickled out about "Autumn in New York," they've expressed similar surprise that the movie isn't ridiculous, though unapologetic about being so shameless.

Fear of critical reprimands was the distributor's worry - love stories about illness are a tough sell in a cynical and savvy viewing crowd. Love stories, period, are a tough sell. Considering myself in that category, this movie had to work to make me buy.

I'd still probably pass. But Ryder and the photography are too easy on the eyes to entirely hate "Autumn in New York." Turkey ain't bad once a year. ★★ 1/2

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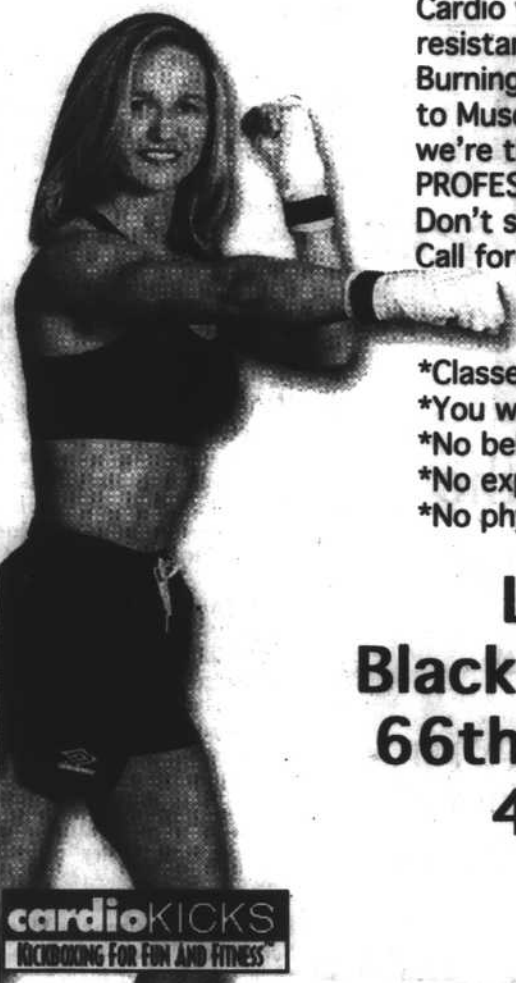
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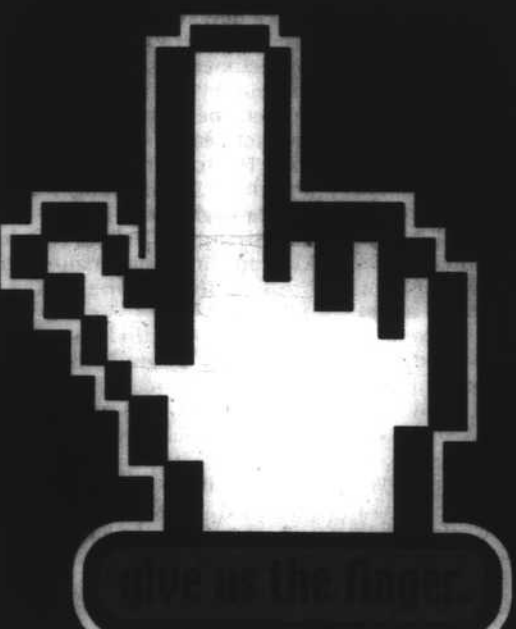
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