

# "Only When I Laugh" a winner...sort of

Neil Simon's new film, "Only When I Laugh" is funny . . . but not quite funny enough.

As in other Simon hits, "Only When I Laugh" probes a relationship, in this case the relationship between an alcoholic actress and her new roommate, her teenaged daughter. Like other Simon works, it depends on lots of rapid-fire humor to get through the slow parts necessary to develop the serious parts of the story.

Unlike other Simon releases, the humor doesn't always work as well as it should, and the story drags as a result.

Marsha Mason, Simon's wife and leading lady, does a superb job in presenting her character, the alcoholic Georgia Hines. The audience wriggles in anxiety as she screws up her life and her relationship with her daughter when she falls off of the wagon and into a few glasses of wine.

Kristy McNichol is not so good as

Hines' daughter Polly. She's too exuberant, hyperactive and teen-age to be believable. McNichol has mastered the art of acting for television, but has yet to learn how to act for the movie camera.

Simon, who wrote and co-produced the film, and director Glenn Jordan went overboard in giving their main characters personality. Mason smokes too much, McNichol bounces too much, James Coco (as Mason's friend and guardian, Jimmy) whimpers too much, and Joan Hackett (as Mason's other friend, an aging beauty queen) sticks her nose in the air too much.

Because the characters are overdone, the humor sometimes falls flat. While the script would be excellent on stage, it doesn't translate well to the screen.

Another problem with "Only When I Laugh" is that it contains elements from earlier Simon works. Simon fans will recognize familiar situations and set-



Three-time Academy Award nominee Marsha Mason stars in Neil Simon's "Only When I Laugh." Photo courtesy of Columbia Pictures

tings. (I still think it's the same apartment he used in "The Goodbye Girl.")

In spite of these problems, "Only When I Laugh" is well worth seeing, if

only to see Marsha Mason pass herself off as Kristy McNichol's sister. It contains many excellent lines, lots of good photography and a nice story.

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As of the end of the day Monday, 16,712 students had filed their registration materials, compared to 17,189 at the same time last year, Johnson says.

More complete information about the number of students enrolled at each class level probably won't be available until the middle of next week, she says.



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