

# 10 characters in search of a plot

**They All Laughed**  
John Ritter, Audrey Hepburn  
Valley River Twin

"I don't know if it's any good," said director Peter Bogdanovich on the phone last week, "but I don't know how to make them any better. It came out exactly as I'd planned it."

Bogdanovich's new film, "They All Laughed," is a light-hearted game of musical beds, in which bumbling private detectives fall in love with their quarries, secretaries, and just about anyone else who happens along.

Unfortunately, it just doesn't work.

Bogdanovich, who wrote and directed the film, is trying to make a comeback from a series of flops after a very impressive start that included successes like "The Last Picture Show," "What's Up, Doc?" and "Paper Moon." His current specialty is

the family comedy, and he has a number of them in the works.

"They All Laughed" does a good job of dealing with a sexual theme while maintaining a PG rating, but that's about the extent of its success.

Hepburn is a wealthy socialite whose absentee husband has her followed by Ben Gazzara. With a little doing, Gazzara soon has Hepburn following him, along with a number of other females.

Hepburn shouldn't be blamed for the lack of depth in her character — all she has to do is hide behind sunglasses and cry when she eventually has to return to her hubby. Gazzara, on the other hand, has a fairly major part, but his character remains hidden. He has an elusive charm with the ladies with about as much justification as the guys in the aftershave commercials.

John Ritter is an unbelievably clumsy gumshoe in Woody Allen glasses. He falls for Dorothy



Among the cast of "They All Laughed" are Audrey Hepburn, Ben Gazzara, John Ritter, Dorothy Stratten and half of Manhattan.

Stratten, a young, cutesy, unhappily married sweetie. (Stratten, by the way, was Bogdanovich's ex-Playboy Buriny protege who was murdered shortly after filming by her estranged husband.)

Surprisingly, these roles aren't as bad as they sound. Although Stratten's character is a bit sketchy and cheerleaderish, the combination of the two naive sweeties is one of the few things in the film that actually works.

Onto this basic framework Bogdanovich heaps extra characters (including his secretary, his kids, his producers and his assistant), lots of country music and suggestive little subplots, evidently in hope of giving the audience something more to look at than two hours of klutzy detectives following their suspects around the streets of Manhattan. It didn't work. Instead, we still get lots of chase scenes separated by strands of a hopelessly tangled plot.

There's no doubt that Bogdanovich is a talented director, as is evidenced by his earlier successes and some of his later

lesser-known works. As he says, "Either you know how to make movies or you don't. I make movies the way I like to and people like them."

"Critics say I was influenced by this or that movie, but that's all a bunch of crap," said Bogdanovich. "(One critic) said that 'Paper Moon' was my homage to Shirley Temple, my homage to 'Little Miss Marker.' I hate Shirley Temple, and I've never even seen 'Little Miss Marker.'"

movies were made better then, and my movies are made well," he said.

Sure, there are some nice shots in the film, and some cute situations. But "They All Laughed" lacks two of the basic necessities for good movies: a good plot and good characterizations. At one point toward the end of the movie, all the females seem to have a secret conspiracy against the male detectives. Alas, even this highly unbelievable ending is denied us, and we're left with very little in the way of an ending at all.

As a result, "They All Laughed" can be summed up in two quotes. Dorothy Stratten wrote a poem about the movie for the other cast members, which ends:

"Now where in this story  
Does everything link?  
Well, somehow, it all makes sense,  
I think."

The other quote comes from Bogdanovich himself: "You can't make a good picture every time."

Yep.

by matt meyer



"I don't know if it's any good..."

Director Peter Bogdanovich

"... but I don't know how to make them any better."

"It's just that there's nothing new under the sun. There's no story that hasn't been done a hundred times before. People think my movies look like things from the 30s and 40s because

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