

At the movies

'Light of Day' leaves audience with nothing

What happens when you mix a gaudy, female, rock-and-roll star with a clean-cut, capitalistic, all-american actor? Any answers? Here's a hint.

Review by
Kevin Long

What do you get if you combine the musical talents of Joan Jett with the acting abilities of Michael J. Fox?

Ah, now the answers seem endless. Unfortunately, what we get when this unlikely pair join forces is mediocrity—plain and simple mediocrity.

Fox and Jett are starring in the newly released movie, "Light of Day." Together they are a brother-and-sister team playing in a rock-and-roll band called "The Barbusters."

In the beginning of the movie, we find out the two share a caring and understanding relationship, which is reinforced by their ability to escape the pressures of home while playing music in the bars of Cleveland at night.

Eventually though, it is this night life away from home and neglect of family responsibilities that finally catch up to the two.

Patty is a rebellious daughter, continuously experiencing problems with her rigid and perfectionist mother, Jean (Gena Rowlands). Patty is concerned primarily with performing in her band and not so concerned with the upbringing of her four-and-a-half-year-old son, Benji.

This conflict between Patty and her mother is smoothed over by Joe, who absorbs much

of the pressure while he serves as confidante to Patty, surrogate father to Benji, and responsible son to his parents.

But as tensions increase at home and on the road with the band, something must give, and at this point Joe quits "The Barbusters" and Patty goes on to join a new band.

As time passes and tensions continue to mount between family members, Joe finds himself living at home while Patty is away living on the road with her new band. But both are suddenly shocked in turn when they each learn their mother has been hospitalized. And it is here, gathered in the hospital together, that we see the family members finally speak out to each other in a revealing climax.

The main problem with "Light of Day" doesn't evolve from poor acting. Instead, it appears to come from the film's lack of direction, which was guided by writer-director Paul Schrader (The Mesquite Coast).

The movie attempts to do too many things at one time. First, it is a story about the trials and tribulations of a rock-and-roll band struggling to make it. Then it moves through the dramatic crisis of a family facing disruption due to lack of communication. And finally, we are treated to small portions of the blue-collar predicament and some of its disenchanting symptoms.

"Light of Day" is a movie that never really takes hold. The acting is very average for a serious drama and the directing is below average. When the movie is over we have nothing to take home with us.



Sami Frey, Theresa Russell and Debra Winger star in "Black Widow," the story of a deadly mate (Russell) and her obsessed pursuer (Winger).

'Black Widow' bumbles technically

Black widow — a venomous spider found in New World, its females having a red-mark hourglass on the underside of the abdomen — Webster New Collegiate Dictionary.

"Black Widow" — a suspense-thriller starring Debra Winger and Theresa Russell— Twentieth Century Fox.

Review by
Johnathan Nelson

Debra Winger stars in "Black Widow" as Alexandra Barnes, a Justice Department special task force member, who notices a peculiarity in the deaths of three prominent and wealthy businessmen, all of whom had rare or bizarre deaths. What she discovers is that all three married younger women and shortly thereafter mysteriously died

in their sleep.

After closer inspection, by talking to relatives of the deceased and examining photos of the couples, she finds that these three ladies are actually the same person who is murdering them and then vanishing with their fortunes. Winger then quits her job and chases the murderer to Hawaii in hopes of catching her and ending this killing spree.

After much success in "An Officer and a Gentleman" and "Terms of Endearment," it appears Winger has fallen upon hard times. Starring in this movie has not helped to raise her stock in the movie industry. She plays a shallow workaholic who has an underlying problem that was never completely revealed and was solved only minimally by her romantic encounter with a would-be victim.

The plot of the movie had

great possibilities, but because of poor writing and directing by Ronald Bass and Bob Rafelson, respectively, the movie falls short.

Rafelson's technical problems were so blatant the audience thought it was hilarious. Not only was the tip of the microphone visible, but so was the rest of it, including the stand. This little surprise had the audience roaring with laughter, and it ruined the serious scene taking place behind the microphone.

"Black Widow" had the possibilities of being a good film back in the earlier stages of its conception, but what resulted was nothing but a trite array of characters and problems. The confusion and disorganization of the movie took the bite out of "Black Widow."



Michael J. Fox and Joan Jett star as brother and sister band members.

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comfortable with her flirting friends.

Rhomer's straightforward style leads us to a sympathetic understanding of Delphine's insecurity. The film was shot in 16mm (later blown up to 35mm) in a documentary-like shooting style. Conversations are captured in long takes with the camera slowly panning around the characters as they speak

their mostly improvised lines. Much of the film feels like a slice of someone's life with a spectator/participant camera capturing the personality and rhythm of people caught in the act of being themselves.

Her vulnerability and chronic mopiness are balanced by her sincere charm, hidden from view by her constant defensiveness, and when her sad self-

image is finally described as she opens up near the end of the film, we can begin to fully understand Delphine.

"Summer" is an unexpectedly heartwarming film, a celebration of the human spirit in even the most dispirited of people. Rhomer's trek into the heart of his Delphine is more honest and real than any film I've seen in a long time.

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