

'Allnighter' leaves boring, silly image of college

By Jackie Barry
Of the Emerald

"The Allnighter" may do more to decrease college enrollment than a school's bad reputation.

Depicting the last day and night before college graduation for five friends at a California surfside college, this film primarily captures the mundane and repetitive nature of communications between friends. It completely misses capturing the dynamic nature of the fun and friendships characteristic of college life.

The film stars Susanna Hoffs, the lead singer for the Bangles, and was produced, directed and co-written by her mother, Tamar Simon Hoffs.

Molly, played by the younger Hoffs, is about to graduate from college and longs for one significant, earth-shattering romance before she's honored as class valedictorian. She wants to meet someone who's "cool, but smart, kind of like Sam Shepard." Unfortunately, her performance and her flat dialogue do little to make the audience care.

The script for "The Allnighter" may depict true dialogue spoken by college students, but phrases like "Hey dude," "birds" and "babes" can only do so

much character building.

Some of the lines were so stupid, they were funny, like, "What did the birds say was on the menu?" And "A babe in the kitchen is worth two on the beach." This from pre-law student, C.J., played by John Terlesky. C.J.'s roommate, Killer (James Anthony Shanta), delivers this cosmic profundity, "Change is inevitable. See the horizon? You are you." If people really talk like this, the world shouldn't be subjected to it.

The film isn't all bad.

The photography and editing of two surfing scenes captures the qualities of this sport quite well. Relying heavily on tracking movement, distant shots of surfers perched under huge waves are pieced together with subjective views of the moving wall of water. There are also underwater shots of boards skimming rapidly over the nearby surface and surfers paddling out to meet the waves.

Joan Cusack as the budding film maker, Gina, gives a good performance as a young woman obsessed with gathering reality on video. But the script doesn't give her much interesting material until halfway through the film



Courtesy Photo

C.J. (John Terlesky) and Molly (Susanna Hoffs) spend a quiet moment together on the beach in "The Allnighter."

when she gets thrown into jail for soliciting.

The self-centered Brad, played by Phil Brock, gives a great performance as a

sports equipment salesman on the way up, with his Beemer (BMW) and his adoring, young, blond college girlfriend, Val (Dedee Pfeiffer), as ornaments.

Coppola's new Viet Nam film not comparable to 'Platoon'

"Gardens of Stone" is being hailed by some as one of the best movies of the year, providing "an even richer and more moving perspective on Viet Nam than 'Platoon.'"

Don't believe it.

"Gardens of Stone" is no "Platoon." Nor should the two be compared. Oliver Stone's epic of life in the trenches is a tour de force of raw intensity;

Review by
Mary Courtis

Francis Coppola's picture is as slow-paced and depressing as the endless rows of gravestones in Arlington Cemetery.

Here, members of the Old Guard, "the Kabuki theatre" of military life bury bodies and wait out their pensions, oscillating between frustration and apathy about the war, their careers and the constant

demands of pomp and ceremony.

The Old Guard teaches its soldiers how to perform, not fight. So the recruits who mark time in its ranks between boot camp and 'Nam leave it unprepared to survive.

One of these fresh-faced cadets is Willow (D.B. Sweeney), an army brat who gives new meaning to the word eager. Willow not only volunteers for military service; he cannot wait to fight in Viet Nam and leaves no brass unturned in his effort to get there.

Two of those he rattles hardest are Sergeant Hazard (James Caan) and his mellow side-kick played by James Earl Jones. Both men, who see a bit of their younger selves in Willow, take him under their wings and try to slow his full-speed charge towards suicide.

Amidst this plodding plotline, however, there are some fine performances. Jones

and Caan are particularly fine as the crusty and crafty veterans and Anjelica Huston has some nice moments as Hazard's girlfriend, Sam. When the movie focuses on these three, it lives — often poignantly.

Unfortunately, the film-makers chose to spend just as much time on Sweeney. His acting is only adequate. So the story of Willow and especially his liaison with Rachel (Mary Stuart Masterson), a Colonel's daughter, invokes more yawns than intrigue.

Too bad. If Coppola had kept his film fixed on Caan and Jones, he might have made a true gem about middle-age crisis in the military and the death of ethics and ideals in a war that had no answers. As it is, "Gardens of Stone" disappoints as often as it delivers.

"Gardens of Stone" shows nightly at the McDonald Theatre in the Downtown Mall.



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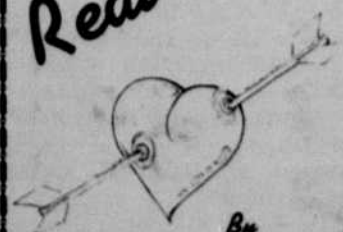
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