

Arts and Entertainment

'In the Mood' tells tale of 15-year-old who grew up fast

In 1944 the world was black and white. In 1987 the world is in color, and it is nice to return to the days of newsreels and big bands. "In the Mood" is a nostalgic film which acts as a time machine, transporting the viewer back to the past.

**Review by
Craig Hoit**
★ ★ 1/2

The film opens with a black-and-white collage of 1940s newsreel images. During this sequence we are introduced to the main character, Ellsworth "Sonny" Wisecarver, as he narrates the newsreel, telling us "...the world was black and white." The joke works, and helps to establish the film's light sense of humor.

Sonny continues, stating that life in 1944 was black and white — there was good and bad, right and wrong. The newsreel is made up of headlines telling of

the exploits of the "woo-woo kid" — Sonny Wisecarver.

"In the Mood" is a true story about a fifteen-year-old boy who marries an older woman, and who, when his marriage is annulled, spends a weekend with another older woman. His experiences were played up with great media hype, and the woo-woo kid became a celebrity. The exposure thrust upon Sonny is shown by the film's use of newsreel footage, radio commentary, and the constant wash of attention he is bathed in. This cold and sensationalized presentation of the individual is contrasted by the film's sympathetic view of Sonny and his circumstances.

Sonny, played by Patrick Dempsey with endearing innocence and optimism, is a boy who wants to be an adult. His family situation is one that he wishes to leave. In trying to grow up, Sonny marks the progress of his physical growth on a door frame, and when his father finds out, Sonny has to



A boy with a taste for older women, Sonny Wisecarver (Patrick Dempsey) actually meets a girl his age, Wendy (Kim Myers).

lick the pencil marks clean. His mother enters the room, looks at the situation and exclaims, "this is not right." She then proceeds to get Sonny a chair so that he won't strain his neck as he cleans the door frame.

Judy, played by Tilia Balsam, lives across the street from Sonny. She also is a prisoner of her circumstances. Her husband beats her. Her social life is made up of a collection of hollow friends who use her house to party. It is at one of these parties that Judy and Sonny meet. The two, both running from their respective black and white worlds, fall in love.

The development of their relationship is somewhat lacking, as it is presented in idealized terms. They LOVE each other in a matter of days — there is no room or time for conflict in this ride from being neighbors to be-

ing newlyweds.

However, the sincerity of Dempsey and Balsam, along with the innocence that the film's period decor evokes, tends to diminish the improbability of the perfect nature of the romance. The romance is not perfect in the eyes of society, and the lovers are torn apart by a judge, as the newspapers stand by to pick up the pieces that fall.

Sonny is now famous. Women from all over the country idolize him, and he is mobbed by women at his place of work. People deal with him as a persona, not as a person. He is the woo-woo kid. The landlady at his boarding house casts a judgemental eye upon Sonny and all of his actions. The only person who will relate to Sonny as Sonny is Francine (Beverly D' Angelo), a twenty-five-year-

old with a husband overseas.

Francine and Sonny develop a warm and humorous relationship in the restrictive and puritanical environment of the boarding house. The two end up running away together to the northern California town of Paradise, where they spend the night together. The woo-woo kid has struck once again. This information is spread across the nation's headlines.

Sonny is sentenced to six years in the California Prison for Boys. He escapes, runs, and ends up resting in a movie house where "And So They Were Married" plays. At this theater he meets a girl (his age) who tells him he is a lot smaller than in the newsreels. The two go for coffee and as they are walking away, Sonny tells us, "and three weeks later Wendy and I were married...."



Courtesy photo

Sonny Wisecarver (Patrick Dempsey) and Judy Cusimano (Talia Balsam) enjoy life after their marriage, which sparked a nationwide scandal.

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