

'Angels' falls short of potential

Ben Maras

The Clackamas Print

If one were to write a plot synopsis for Canadian director Scott Smith's 2003 film "Falling Angels" it would appear as follows:

"Three teenage girls come of age under the tyrannical rule of an anger-engulfed father, while they care for their alcoholic shell-of-her-former-self mother, all the while experimenting with mind altering drugs and their own sexuality. Oh yes, and there's a dark secret."

Dubbed "Little Women' on acid" by some critics, the black comedy (half the time you're wondering if you should really laugh at the situation) takes place in 1960s under the cloud of the Cold War and the counterculture movement.

Running at approximately two hours long, "Falling Angels" is, to say the least, a unique window into a trying time for the world and the "all-American" family, although at times the window is a

little fogged up.

The film opens with the three girls at their mother's funeral, their father stumbling into the chapel in a drunken stupor, and then proceeds to go back in time to tell the story.

Following a loose plot and little-to-no linear continuity (something which can lead to confusion at times), Smith seemed more focused on painting a portrait than telling a story. The characters can seem so cliché at times that they could have been created by Charles Dickens.

There's the broken-down mother, who throughout the movie is never seen without her bathrobe or coffee cup of whiskey, staring despondently at the artificial images on the prehistoric television set. On the other side, there's the alcoholic father, the patriarch (read: tyrant) of the family, the sort of gent who gives his daughters socks and tool belts for Christmas, and instead of going to Disneyland, forces them to spend two weeks in his underground bomb shelter in preparation for "the big one." Needless



Dubbed "'Little Women' on acid," this film follows the coming-of-age of three teenage girls who struggle under the tyranny of their father to overcome their alcoholic mother's death.

to say, he provides the catalyst for the disasters to come.

The daughters follow similar clichés: the old, responsible daughter (a closet lesbian); the middle child who spends her every waking minute finding her father's last nerve and successfully riding it to the edge; and the young, sweet daughter who never did anything but love her family—until that is, she gets knocked up by a 30-something-year-old man.

Despite the heavy sexual undertones of the film, kiddy-porn it is not, but be prepared for a bit of sexually explicit dialogue and mild nudity.

Most obvious is Smith's intentions of social commentary throughout the film. The repeating of the word "tyrant" at various points throughout the film ties the father to what he fears the most during the Cold War era—the communist USSR, showing a unique perspective on how fear affects the human psyche.

A statement is also to be seen in the stark contrast between the middle child, Lou—who experiments with marijuana, LSD, and free-thinking, yet remains relatively normal—and the all-American conservative parents, who are completely crippled by their alcoholism.

Remember what I said at the beginning about a dark secret? They had a baby brother who died in a tragic "accident" in Niagara Falls. Sounds like an important part of the plot, right? Wrong. It feels as if that was duct-taped into the script as an attempt to give the audience something to chew on while the portrait of the family was painted before their very eyes.

All in all, "Falling Angels" is a good film for those who are willing to look beyond the predictable laid out linear storylines and begin to see something new and different, into something a bit more abstract. It gets a solid B+ being a new take on an old story with good directing, but not living up to what it could have been.



Norma (Montè Gangè), Sandy (Kristin Adams) and Lou (Katharine Isabelle) portray the sisters who live under the cloud of the Cold War.

Photo courtesy of tribute.ca

Barrymore pitches perfect game, Fallon redeems himself

Jeff Sorensen

The Clackamas Print

Whatever it was that made Drew Barrymore take a new direction with her career in 2004, her role in "Fever Pitch" opposite Jimmy Fallon proves it was probably the best decision she's ever made.

"Pitch" follows the story of Ben (Fallon), a Boston area school teacher who runs into Lindsey (Barrymore) during a field trip to the marketing firm where she makes a living. Ben asks Lindsey on a date, and after

initial rejection and deliberation with her friends, decides to give Ben a chance. The pair gets along famously until Ben reveals the identity of his first true love: The Boston Red Sox.

At first, Lindsey insists that it's a blessing in disguise. She's up for a big promotion and needs to focus on her job, so with Ben following his tradition of catching every Red Sox game since he was 11, she can focus on her work without Ben feeling rejected.

But Ben loves Lindsey so much he wants her to share in his every experience with his

favorite team. Quirkiness ensues and the couple experiences both love and loss within themselves and with the Sox.

Looking at the trailers, the movie seems about as formulaic as romantic comedies get. Boy meets girl, a few cheap laughs, a happy ending, and everyone goes home with a fuzzy feeling. The difference the trailers frustratingly neglect is that this movie is directed by the Farrelly brothers ("Dumb and Dumber," "Something About Mary," "Shallow Hal"), a fact that makes this one worth the \$5.50 matinee price (but not worth full price

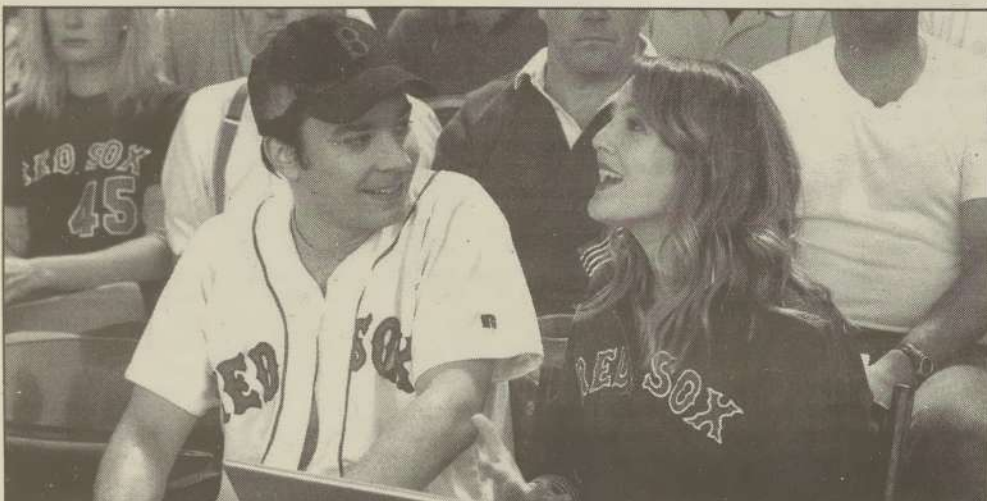
for anyone still disappointed at Fallon for "Taxi").

Bitterness aside, Fallon and Barrymore compliment each other well, and with the help of the Farrellys, they are able to make an otherwise predictable movie actually funny and mostly fun to watch.

Most of the character interaction felt realistic and at times managed to convey the awkwardness of certain scenes equally as well as the comfortably laughable ones with plenty of screen

chemistry to go around, showing off exactly what happens with the brothers Farrelly flexing their directorial muscles.

The movie "Fever Pitch" is not a must-see flick, but a good way to spend an afternoon. Fallon regains some ground for the aforementioned failure, and following her previous successful performance in "50 First Dates," Barrymore two-for-two and seems to finally give a damn about the respect Hollywood she's never had.



Ben (Fallon) shares his obsession with the Red Sox with new girlfriend, Lindsey (Barrymore) who compromises with Ben by working on her laptop while cheering for the home team.

Photo courtesy of Twentieth Century Fox

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