

Sorry, Charlie

The past is catching up to Charlie Fineman

REIGN OVER ME: Written and directed by Mike Binder. Cinematography, Russ T. Alsobrook. Music, Rolfe Kent. Starring Adam Sandler, Don Cheadle, Jada Pinkett Smith, Liv Tyler, Saffron Burrows and Donald Sutherland. Columbia Pictures, 2007. R. 124 minutes. ★★☆☆☆

Judging by the way Charlie Fineman (Adam Sandler) scooters around New York at all hours, wrapped in headphones blasting The Who, he isn't your average guy. Strongly reminiscent of Eric Bogosian with a hangover — that or a very tired grad student — Charlie is living a male fantasy: He spends his days at the movies or in record stores while by night he plays drums in a punk band. A connoisseur of junk food and video games, he's got a bachelor existence *par excellence* except for one small thing: Charlie can't remember anything from before his wife and daughters were killed.

Or can he? The success of *Reign Over Me*, a good if occasionally wispy film directed by Mike Binder (*The Upside of Anger*), depends upon whether you accept Charlie's delusions, which go undiagnosed for much of the film. (Actually, the film relies heavily upon Sandler's portrayal of those delusions, but more on that topic shortly.) At the very least, Charlie is socially awkward: When Alan Johnson (Don Cheadle), who hasn't seen Charlie

needs some guy time. You would, too, if you were married to Janeane (Jada Pinkett Smith), whose idea of hot fun is putting together a 1,000 piece puzzle. Fully

Breakdowns ensue, and breakthroughs can't be far off, but unfortunately *Reign* feels predictable in the middle as it becomes a game of When Will Charlie Tell? The film doesn't hide the fact that Alan needs therapy as much as Charlie, so you might feel (as I did) a little browbeaten by the theme of suffering having many faces. But Cheadle gives a typically loose performance as Alan, a man who has everything but lacks true perspective. And Sandler? He acquits himself well as Charlie — a rare nongooftball role — but the film asks Sandler to be deeply vulnerable at times, and he's not always in pitch-perfect control.

Reign Over Me turns out to be a 9/11 movie in the same way Bruce Springsteen's *The Rising* is a 9/11 album: subtly, indirectly and, at times, poetically. The film is about the emotional aftermath of great loss; to a large degree, it succeeds by keeping politics from seeping into matters of the heart. *Reign Over Me* isn't a perfect film — I felt my emotions herded at times, and the latter part of the film wanders — but the supporting roles are wonderful, particularly Liv Tyler's, and the music is especially effective. Springsteen actually makes several appearances in the film, in music and name anyway, in particular his album *The River*, which contains a line from "Drive All Night" that expresses Charlie's collapse about as well as anything can: "When I lost you, honey ... I think I lost my guts too." **EW**



Charlie (Adam Sandler) and Alan (Don Cheadle) in *Reign Over Me*

for four years, raises the subject of Charlie's dead family, Charlie responds by demanding "Who sent you?" and pouring root beer all over Alan. This is going to be a tough assignment for Alan, who knew Charlie back in dental school, but Alan has a reason for sticking by Charlie: Alan

clothed, no less. Bo-ring!

Alan wants to help Charlie, but as you might expect, Charlie has to help himself first. Alan presses Charlie to discuss what happened, a prospect that seems remote for the initial, stronger half of *Reign Over Me*. Then Alan loses someone close to him.

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SHOOTER R
12:25, 3:30, 7:00, 7:30, 10:00, 10:35

TMNT PG
12:10, 2:05, 2:55, 4:30, 5:25, 7:05, 7:50, 9:30, 10:15

REIGN OVER ME R
1:00, 4:00, 7:10, 10:10

HILLS HAVE EYES II R
1:30, 3:55, 7:35, 10:05

WILD HOGS PG13
12:20, 1:45, 2:50, 4:25, 5:30, 8:05, 10:40

PRIDE PG
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[11:45] 2:35, 4:50, 7:40, 9:55

BREACH PG13
[11:50] 2:25, 4:55, 7:25, 10:10

THE MESSENGERS PG13
[12:10] 2:45, 5:05, 7:20, 9:50

BECAUSE I SAID SO PG13
[11:40] 2:15, 4:45, 7:35, 10:05

BLOOD DIAMOND R
[11:55] 3:05, 7:15, 10:25

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS PG13
[11:35] 2:20, 5:10, 7:50, 10:30

HAPPY FEET PG
[11:15] [12:05] 2:00, 2:40, 4:30, 5:15, 7:05, 7:45, 9:35, 10:15

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[11:25] 2:05, 4:40, 7:10, 9:45

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