

'An Officer and a Gentleman' is a good old-fashioned love story

by Terry Duran
Battalion Staff
Go see *An Officer and a Gentleman*.

If you call yourself a human being, that is. If you don't have a heart and a soul and a mind, don't bother — it won't do anything for you.

It's something of an old-fashioned love story, but it is utterly believable and utterly gut-

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wrenching in its sincerity — not cornball at all. Richard Gere (*American Gigolo*) and Debra Winger (*Urban Cowboy*) give absolutely sterling performances, as do Louis Gossett Jr. and the rest of the well-drawn and well-acted cast. The dialogue is alive, intense and as real as yesterday's argument. It's a

rare film that captures your emotions and makes you think at the same time.

Gere plays Zack Mayo, the son of a woman-chasing, hell-raising enlisted sailor stationed in the Philippines. Mayo, a tough loner, decides he wants to fly jets for the Navy after he finishes college, but that means he has to become an officer — surprise, Dad — and that means he has to make it through the naval aviation officer candidate school on Puget Sound.

Winger is Paula, who works in a paper factory near the base. She is one of the girls the Navy types at the base call "Puget debbs"; they race to the base after work on Fridays to attend the planned social functions and shop for a naval aviator husband.

Gossett is Marine Gunnery Sergeant Coley who must take two dozen unspanked young civilians and make officers out of them. Gossett's performance may be the most surprising of all: he takes the tired, overused stereotype of a drill sergeant and makes him real, gives him an edge. Tough, fierce, but human and caring. But not crusty with a mushy interior, as is so often portrayed.

Winger and her best friend (Lisa Blount) meet Gere and his best buddy (David Keith) at one of these weekend dances, and they begin their same-but-different love affairs on the beach that night.

Other important issues are

raised here, though, besides the obvious love affair stuff, well done as it is. Mayo doesn't really

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care about anybody but himself; with that attitude, he can't cut it as an officer or a lover. Can he change? And will it be in time? Mayo's baby-faced buddy, Sid Worley (Keith), must struggle with the legacy of Navy pilot father and brother — the brother killed in Vietnam — and the clash of his Oklahoma back-

ground with the tempting wiles of his blonde Puget deb girlfriend. The rest of Mayo's training platoon must overcome — or not, as the case may be — their own personal fears and weaknesses.

It's easy to identify with the characters in the movie — they are real people in the true, complimentary sense. We can see something of ourselves and others in the two main character couples, the other officer candidates, the drill sergeant. The husky-voiced Winger in particular is splendid: she shows us the naked soul of her character, every moment honest, raw and real. Gere is not far behind: as a man afraid of being loved but still wishing for love, he turns in what I can only call a very human performance.

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'World According to Garp': no comedy, but still funny

by Gary Barker
Battalion Staff
The question everyone seems to be asking about *The World According to Garp* is: Is it like

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the book? The answer: It doesn't matter.

Garp is a superb-warm-witty-funny-sad film that will dazzle readers and non-readers. The 3.5 million readers who feasted

on John Irving's book will feel the film was made for them — and non-readers will get a modest idea of what they missed.

The film follows the plot of the book almost literally. *Garp* is the story of a writer trying to stay sane in an insane world. Garp is the bastard son of a famous feminist mother who fights for her beliefs. The mother, Jenny, is surrounded by unusual women, including a transsexual and a group of women who cut out their tongues to protest the rape of an 11-year-old girl, who had her tongue cut out by her rapists.

It is in this mixed-up world that Garp grows up, becomes a

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writer, gets married, has children and fights to keep fidelity

in his marriage.

The world, according to Garp, is not a safe place. Catastrophe creeps up on happiness every chance it gets. One can never be sure of what will happen next. Irving symbolized catastrophic, fatal force and led it the "undertoad," a that comes from Garp's youngest son. The boy warned, while swimming in the ocean, to beware of the undertoad. Thinking he heard "undertoad," he looks for what he imagines to be awful creatures lurk underwater.

Irving's book is full of metaphors like this one, some more subtle, some less so. One of the reasons his fiction has become so popular and earned him something of a following — and he deserves it — is that *Garp* is superb pop fiction, especially compared to the schlock that passes for fiction today.

Unfortunately, the movie never captures the subtlety of Irving. The movie pays lip service to the "undertoad" but to convey the significance of Director George Roy Hill (*Beverly Hills Cop*, *Cassidy* and *The Sandlot*). *A Little Romance* and *Sting*) replaced the subtlety with clever visual imagery that makes the film moving too fast for subtlety. But what Hill

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screenwriter Steve Tesler (*Breaking Away*) left out in subtlety, they made up in humor. The movie's funny moments, it reeks of life. All the happy-sad, catastrophic moments that characterize the human condition are there. However, however immoral, however violent or hypocritical, they are there.

In addition to the well-written screenplay, the actors are superb. Glenn Close as Garp's mother is perhaps the best Robin Williams, as Garp, is also joy. It was worth \$3.75 just to see Mork angry. But Williams is Mork here; he can act, and with more screen experience in serious roles, he should get even better.

The main drawback to the movie is that it left out, as it had to, huge chunks of the book's plot. Perhaps the main difference in the book and the movie is the ending. The events are the same, but the mood is totally different.

The ending in the movie is too happy. Though Irving is a heavyweight fatalist like Thomas Hardy, he still captures the feeling of despair much better than the movie does. But the fatalism has never been popular at the box office.

Don't be misled by the previews, *Garp* is no comedy, but it is still worth seeing. The movie starts here Friday. Running time is 2 1/2 hours.

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