

# Movies

## 'The Bear' is superficial and shallow

By SHAWN BEHLEN  
 Staff Reviewer

Last week, Director Richard Sarafian told *At Ease* that he wanted to show more about Paul "Bear" Bryant in "The Bear" than just his football exploits. He wanted to show us the 'man behind the legend,' to use an old cliché.

I hate to be the voice of doom, folks, but he just doesn't do it.

"The Bear" is a superficial look at a very long and illustrious career. It dutifully hits every highlight and every record-breaking event. But that is all it does. And that we already knew.

The film follows Bryant from age 17 when he fought a bear to earn his nickname, to the 1983 Liberty Bowl where he won his 323rd victory. In between there, he attends the University of Alabama and is a member of the undefeated team that wins the 1934 Rose Bowl, becomes an assistant coach at Alabama, moves on to the University of Maryland for one year, coaches at the University of Kentucky and turns a losing program into a winning one with the school's first bowl bid, comes to Texas A&M and starts a radical training program that is designed to motivate a championship team, and finally ends up as the nation's winningest coach back at Alabama.

That's a pretty long list there, but it doesn't tell you anything about the man that did all that, does it? Well, neither does the



### Halftime Speech

Gary Busey, as Paul 'Bear' Bryant, gives a locker room pep talk to the Texas A&M football team during a scene from "The Bear."

film, which is a similar list on celluloid. It follows event after event, game after game, move after move, and never lets us see more. We are never shown why Bryant acts and reacts like he does. And that is what this film is supposedly trying to do.

The saving grace of this film is Gary Busey. He gives a strong performance as Bryant. It is even better than his earlier portrayal of Buddy Holly, for which he received an Academy Award nomination. The hardest part of his job had to be

making the time changes and ages believable. Busey pulls it off. I only wish there had been more of a story for him to work with.

The other performances can't really be evaluated because nobody but Busey is on the screen

long enough to really do anything. So many events are squeezed into such a short time that people come and go after about three lines of dialogue — never to be seen again.

The scenes at Texas A&M take up a fair portion of the film. The main problem is that it is painfully obvious that these scenes were filmed in 1983 and not when Bryant was around. I even caught sight of some guys holding up signs telling the crowds what to do during the football game scene. The bonfire shot is short, but the yell practice at The Grove is fairly long.

The scenes at the Junction training camp, where Bryant took freshmen recruits the first year he was here, will surely cause some comments. The whole situation is used mostly for humor in the film (aren't Aggies always worth a good laugh?), when there is nothing funny about anything Bryant is doing.

Before seeing this film, I had learned quite a bit about Bryant and was anxious to learn the answers to several questions. What gave Bryant such control over his players that they would do anything he asked? How could he get away with brutal tactics that most people wouldn't put up with? In other words, what made him so special?

Now that I've seen "The Bear" I still have those same questions and no answers.

## Hollywood marriage fails in moving drama

By SHAWN BEHLEN  
 Staff Reviewer

"Irreconcilable Differences" is being billed as a comedy. Well, don't you believe it. There are some funny moments and some funny lines, but overall, we're talking serious drama here.

The film stars Ryan O'Neal, Shelley Long ("Cheers") and Drew Barrymore ("E.T."). As it starts, Barrymore is taking her parents, O'Neal and Long, to court — she wants a divorce. "You treat me like chattel," she says.

Through extended flashbacks during the court proceedings, we then get to see her parents' relationship from beginning to end.

They meet on a highway. Long is driving her fiancé's car to California and O'Neal is hitchhiking to UCLA where he has been hired as a professor of film. The car is stolen, but they fall in love

anyway. They talk about his graduate thesis and her desire to write children's books and love is oh, so sweet. Long then breaks the news to her old flame (one of the best scenes in the movie) and marries O'Neal two days later.

Life in California is pleasant, but not very exciting for the newly married couple. He loves his job, she cleans the house and they have a beautiful daughter. Then, O'Neal is asked to write a screenplay and, if it meets approval, direct it. He and Long end up writing it together, he gets to direct and the film is a huge success.

O'Neal becomes Mr. Hollywood and for his next film picks a local car-hop to play the lead. She moves in ("So we can work with her night and day," he tells Long) and takes over. Eventually, Long moves out.

His next film, a musical version of "Gone With the

Wind," stars his protegee once again. Needless to say, with a premise like that it is the biggest bomb in history. Long, who has been doing nothing but sulking and eating and eating and eating, starts writing again as a form of revenge.

"He Said It Would Last Forever" becomes the number one book in the land and the tables are reversed. She even buys O'Neal's house which he must sell because of bankruptcy. The bitterness and feuds are not pretty.

Throughout all of this, someone is being ignored — their child. Careers and revenge have taken over. The daughter is the last thing on her parents' minds. Several scenes are shot in an excellent manner that drives this point home. O'Neal and Long will be screaming at each other and Barrymore will be way down in the corner of the screen watching with wide

eyes and a slack expression. She sees a lot more than any little girl should. Her parents play her off against each other and, as she explains in court, treat her like a dog.

"You pet a dog when you need attention and then forget about it for days," she says. "People shouldn't be treated like dogs." Pretty cynical for an eight year old, right? Well, her parents deserve it.

As you can tell from that description, this film addresses more than just the rights of children. Eventually, it settles down on the age-old topic of Hollywood corruption. Money, fame and reputation are what rip this family apart. Once they lose simple values, happiness and caring are gone.

The film does a good job of showing the family's destruction. The writers have obviously been around the situation enough to pin it to the

wall for observation. Not all scenes are successful, but the ones that work are strong and in the large majority.

The performances by O'Neal and Long also are good. After so many horrible performances in so many terrible movies, O'Neal has finally redeemed himself in this one. Even though his character obviously is making the wrong choices throughout this film, O'Neal makes it easy to understand why he would do so.

Long proves that she can work on the big screen as well as she does on television. Here is a characterization with depth. She is originally the one that is jilted, but she comes back to exact payment with a vengeance. Long makes both attitudes believable.

Together, they make this film work. It examines an unpleasant side of fame and fortune and does it well.