

'St. Elmo's Fire' doesn't hold match to 'Big Chill'

By MARY McWHORTER
Movie Reviewer

WITH THE RECENT TREND OF science fiction, Vietnam, and Conan movies, it's nice to see a return of the "people movie" — one that emits warmth and human compassion.

It's a movie you want to see when you have just had a fight with your best friend, when the whole world has dumped on you, and when your faith in humanity needs renewing.

"The Big Chill" seems to have initiated this trend. It's an excellent film that deals with a group of middle-aged college friends that are reunited by the suicide of one of their comrades. During the reunion, the characters reaffirm the friendships they had let stagnate.

Next came "The Breakfast Club." It gave a very realistic picture of contemporary high school society, complete with a representative of each major caste: a popular princess, a jock, a bookworm, a withdrawn neurotic and a freak.

The greatest appeal of this movie is its ability to entice the viewer into identifying with at least one of the characters. I could identify with all five of the characters in "The Breakfast Club." And anyone, like me, who didn't really gain much from high school or was a victim of the social cliques could appreciate this movie.

NOW WE HAVE THE NEXT installment, "St. Elmo's Fire." It concerns the escapades of seven college friends who have graduated and now must find their



"St. Elmo's Fire" is the next movie in the return of "people movies" — films that evoke your compassion.

separate ways in the world. They test their friendships and gain independence.

As a senior due to graduate in May, I was looking forward to the insights this movie might give me. But I was disappointed.

The movie, although entertaining, lacks the warmth and sentiment of its predecessors.

The secret to the success of these movies is characterization. The characters in "The Big Chill" and

"The Breakfast Club" are not only easy to identify with, but, by skillful acting and directing, make the viewer believe in them and want to get to know them better. In addition, the writer must interweave the characters' actions and dialogue to create a believable and entertaining film. When this happens, the viewer forgets that he is sitting in a theatre watching a movie, and inserts himself into the movie, becoming a part of the action itself. This is the magic

of the movies.

Joel Schumacher, the director, strives to create this mystical experience. But he only manages to assemble a contrived group of characters that never convinces me of their supposedly great friendships.

Schumacher co-wrote the script with Carl Kurlander, who has had no motion picture credit before. Schumacher previously directed "The Incredible Shrinking Woman" and wrote the screenplays for "Car Wash" and "The Wiz."

For "St. Elmo's Fire" Schumacher cast three stars from "The Breakfast Club," Emilio Estevez, Judd Nelson and Ally Sheedy. Rob Lowe and Andrew McCarthy from "Class" also star.

IN CONTRAST TO "THE BIG Chill" and "The Breakfast Club," the characters spend very little time actually together. Maybe Schumacher is trying to emphasize each character search for independence. But it seems that all the characters are on wild tangents from a quest for some form of love. These escapades provide a few laughs but they also distract from what should have been the real purpose of the movie — to make the viewer sympathize and identify with the characters, instead of just laughing at them.

All in all, I can recommend this movie on the merit of the few scenes where the characters actually interact. Although the actors in this film are quite young, they make up quite an impressive ensemble of talent. I can only wish that I was given more to see. Instead, I just got a taste of what might had been, and then had the door slammed in my face. □

Liverpool lads tell critics to relax

Associated Press

"I always say enjoy. I think that's basically the key word to life itself, for everybody."

That's a typical quote from Holly Johnson, whose band Frankie Goes to Hollywood has flooded the world over the past year with its flamboyant vision of life, sex and politics — attracting both fans and critics.

Singles and videos from its debut LP, "Welcome to the Pleasure Dome," have been extremely successful. It also has spawned a fashion rage of oversize T-shirts proclaiming Frankie philosophy: "Frankie Say Relax," "Frankie Say War! Hide Yourself" and "Frankie Say Arm the Unemployed."

Whether or not people really like to hear what Frankie say, they've been

listening. The band — Johnson, co-vocalist Paul Rutherford, bassist Mark O'Toole, guitarist Brian Nash and drummer Peter Gill — rose from obscurity in Liverpool to phenomenal popularity in England last year with its debut hit, "Relax."

The song was banned by the British Broadcasting Company for its suggestive lyrics. Some U.S. radio stations also refused to play "Relax," labeling it obscene. MTV rejected the first version of the song's video, which featured the band in a leather bar, participating in a variety of pleasures.

"Relax" is about positive motivation," Johnson says, "and about using it the right way to achieve what you want — which is paralleled with sexual innuendo, with sexual cli-

max as a degree of achievement. I wasn't expecting censorship. It's a bit prehistoric.

"It's only dirty if you have a dirty mind. It's cleverly done — a kid wouldn't think it was dirty. It would look like a romp in a play group, you know, kindergarten stuff."

Johnson defends the band against the labels that critics put on it.

"We were never overtly gay," he says. "A visual image that we presented in the early incarnation of Frankie Goes To Hollywood was very leather and scantily clad. But this for us was based on the movie 'Mad Max' or 'The Road Warrior.' It was construed by a lot of people as being very gay or very sado-masochism oriented. That's how we got that label." □

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