

# reviews

**"Beyond Therapy"**  
Directed by Robert Altman  
Starring Jeff Goldblum, Julie Hagerty and Christopher Guest  
★★★★

"Beyond Therapy" is a combination of a Woody Allen movie and a French sex farce. It's a funny movie but the humor is a bit dated and is so subtle it's often missed.

Bruce (Jeff Goldblum) is a bisexual man ready to settle down with a woman, so he places an ad in the "personals" column. His ad is answered by Prudence (Julie Hagerty) and they

meet in a French restaurant.

During the dinner, Bruce admits that he is bisexual and lives with his boyfriend. Prudence, a conservative and confused woman, is upset by Bruce's confession and his marriage proposal. She throws her drink in his face and storms out of the restaurant.

Prudence and Bruce are seeing therapists whose offices are next door to each other. Bruce's therapist, Charlotte (Glenda Jackson), is much more confused than any patient imaginable. Prudence's therapist, Stuart (Tom

Conti), wants only to jump on the couch with his female patients and failed to impress Prudence during their brief affair.

Bruce places another ad in the paper and uses a different name. Prudence, also using a different name, answers the ad and they meet at the same French restaurant. They get along much better this time and agree to start seeing each other.

For "Beyond Therapy," director Robert Altman, whose earlier films include "M\*A\*S\*H," "Nashville," "Three Women" and "Come Back to the Five and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean," has taken Christopher Durang's play and made a very theatrical film. The

choreography and cinematography are structured in a such a way that the film resembles a play but isn't limited to a stage.

Directors of plays sometimes try to work actors and set together in such a way that the relation between the actors and the set helps to tell the story. This technique, called *mise-en-scene*, is used by Altman to great effect, especially in the scene with Bruce, Prudence and Bob in Bruce's apartment.

Another of the film's strong points is the use of overlapping dialogue. In real life, lots of people are always talking at the same time but in the movies the characters usually wait until everyone else is finished before they start

talking. Overlapping dialogue is a theatrical technique that wasn't used in film until Orson Welles' "Citizen Kane." No other director since Welles has used overlapping dialogue like Altman.

The cast gives fine performances, but the characters are so broad and bigger-than-life that it might be distracting to those viewers who are used to typical films. Some of the funniest moments in the movie are almost lost because they are so subtle, and the characters are anything but subtle.

About 10 years ago, psychology and therapy were trendy among the "in" crowd. Today the brand of "couch humor" set forth on "The Bob Newhart Show" might seem a bit old-fashioned when used in "Beyond Therapy."

—Review by Karl Pallmeyer

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