

reviews

"Baby Boom"
Starring Diane Keaton, Harold Ramis and Sam Shepard
Directed by Charles Shyer
Rated PG
**1/2

"Baby Boom" has received very favorable reviews from several film critics so far. It is difficult to understand why. The movie is about thirty minutes too long, moves very slowly and tries to cover so many issues that none of them are covered properly. The ending is predictable and the writing shows little creativity.

The stars of the film, Diane Keaton, Harold Ramis and Sam Shepard, give entertaining performances but their acting skills are not enough to keep this film interesting.

Keaton plays J.C. Wiatt, a graduate of Yale and Harvard, and a very dedicated corporate employee. Ramis portrays Stephen, her equally dedicated boyfriend with whom she shares an apartment.

When her cousin dies in an accident overseas, Wiatt gains custody of the surviving child, Elizabeth. Wiatt's first

inclination is to put Elizabeth up for adoption, but has second thoughts and decides to keep the baby instead.

However, Elizabeth takes up so much of Wiatt's time that her job productivity falls off, Stephen leaves her and Wiatt quits her job. She and the child then move to Hadleyville, Vt., a small town in the mountains.

As Wiatt tries to put her life back together and cope with the slower life style, she starts a romance with the local veterinarian, Sam Cooper, played by Sam Shepard.

The movie takes a humorous look at modern parenthood and people trying to climb the corporate ladder. The main theme is that it is impossible for a single parent to balance a career and a child.

The story shows how Elizabeth affects Wiatt's relationship with Stephen, her boss, her fellow workers and Cooper. To a lesser extent, the relationship between Wiatt and Elizabeth is analyzed.

None of these themes are adequately covered, and the movie would have been much better had it concentrated on how the baby affects Wiatt's work or how it affects her personal life, but not both at the same time. As soon as one story line becomes interesting the movie drops it and moves on to another. Halfway through the film this becomes so frustrating that the movie ceases to be interesting.

The movie does have some funny moments and the acting is above average, but the writing presents nothing new or creative and the film is disappointing.

-Review by Tom Reinarts

"Less Than Zero"
Starring Andrew McCarthy, Jami Gertz and Robert Downey, Jr.
Directed by Marek Kaniweska
Rated PG

"Less Than Zero" is the kind of movie that goes beyond entertainment and borders on education. You will not necessarily enjoy this movie, but once you see it, you will never look at life quite the same again.

The movie is based on a Bret Easton Ellis novel, but bears little resemblance to the book — fortunately. Ellis' style resembles stream of consciousness writing and seems to go on and on and on, with no recognizable beginning, middle or end. The movie, on the other hand, has a definite starting point and climax, though it still lacks a resolution. But that's the beauty of it; real life problems rarely have resolutions, either.

Jami Gertz, who plays the leading female role in the movie, said that the contradictions between the movie and the book were completely intentional.

"We tried to touch on every issue in the book, but we definitely made a very different movie than the book," she said Thursday at a press conference in St. Louis.

You may remember Gertz as the abrasive Muffy Tepperman in the television comedy "Square Pegs." In "Less Than Zero," Gertz plays Blair Kennedy, a successful and very wealthy model who is afraid to go to college. Gertz' on-screen boyfriend, Clay Easton, is played by Andrew McCarthy ("Mannequin" and "St. Elmo's Fire"), but the story actually

centers around Robert Downey, Jr. ("Back to School" and "Weird Science"), in his role as drug addict Julian Wells.

Blair, Clay and Julian are high school friends who are reunited in Los Angeles over the Christmas holidays. Blair asks for Clay's help in dealing with Julian, who has gotten himself in over his head in drug usage, both psychologically and financially. But Blair has a drug problem of her own, and the plot is complicated as she and Clay struggle to renew their romantic relationship.

All three actors give commendable, and, more importantly, very believable performances. It is easy to sympathize with their characters, and they do a good job of keeping the movie moving.

"Less Than Zero" is a realistic "slice of life" film that explores the affluent lifestyle of teenagers growing up in Los Angeles. It focuses on friendships, and how drugs can destroy friendships — and lives. It's message is a powerful one, but it does not hit the viewer right between the eyes. Instead, it hits you squarely in the heart, just as the academy award-winning movie "Platoon" does. And, like "Platoon," "Less Than Zero" is not a comfortable experience.

"We didn't want to make a 'Just say no' commercial for an hour and 40 minutes," Gertz explained. "We just wanted to show what drugs can do to your friends . . . There's nothing glamorous about it."

Do not go see "Less Than Zero" if you want to be entertained. But don't miss it if you want to expand your perspectives.

-Review by Karen Kroesche

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