

Movie Review

'Grand Canyon' well worth the view

by Timm Doolen
The Battalion

Grand Canyon
Starring: Kevin Kline, Danny Glover, Mary McDonnell
Directed by Lawrence Kasdan
Rated R

"Grand Canyon" is one of those movies that aims high and almost makes it. Both the strongest and weakest points of this drama are its complexity. By trying to show us how equally good and bad life is, the movie mirrors life itself by being intricately complex and occasionally losing cohesion.

Writer-director Lawrence Kasdan shoots for big issues in this film - he questions why life is like it is, especially for a particular handful of Los Angeles residents. Why in the space of a day or just a few hours can life seem both completely unbearable and utterly incredible?

The story of almost a dozen characters is complex, to say the least, and while the time covered in the film is only a few months, the diversity of issues covered vary from dealing with middle-age and letting your kids go, to experiencing what it is like to almost be killed.

The main character of the film, Mack (Kevin Kline), gets stranded on some back streets in L.A. after a Lakers game. While he's hounded by five members of a street gang, the tow-truck arrives to pick up the disabled car, scaring the thugs off and saving Mack's life.

The driver of the tow-truck, Simon (Danny Glover) and Mack slowly become friends. Meanwhile, Mack's friend Davis (Steve Martin) is shot in the leg by a robber, and Mack's wife Claire (Mary McDonnell) finds an abandoned baby while jogging. Also, Mack's secretary is in love with him after a one-night mistake, and Mack's son falls in love while at summer camp, causing Claire to have to deal with letting her baby boy go.

On the other side of town, Simon's sister's son is a member of a gang, while Simon himself is divorced with a deaf daughter who is attending college in Washington, D.C. And that's just the main points of the plot!

This is a variety of stories combined - it's "The Big Chill" (which was also directed by Kasdan) meets "Ordinary People" meets "Fried Green Tomatoes" meets "Boyz 'N' the Hood." The story is occasionally overburdened



Mack (Kevin Kline) and best friend Davis (Steve Martin), a movie producer, discuss the virtues of directing cheap action films on the set of a Hollywood studio in writer-director Lawrence Kasdan's new drama, "Grand Canyon."

by sub-plots and dream sequences which are sometimes meaningful, often not.

Many times there's just the feeling that there's too many things going on - you never know what's going to happen next, what is relevant or what is important to remember. For example, at one point in the movie, in the space of about two minutes, Mack cuts his finger while cooking, then there's an earthquake and then the next-door neighbor has a heart attack. Each of these might be the basis for a significant sequence of the movie, but strewn together, the individual events lose individual significance, and the plot becomes almost entirely subordinate to the theme of the film.

This makes the generally impressive movie wildly uneven. There are times when I thought I couldn't stand it, and other times when I felt it was almost achieving the realization of its grandiose themes - trying to figure out life.

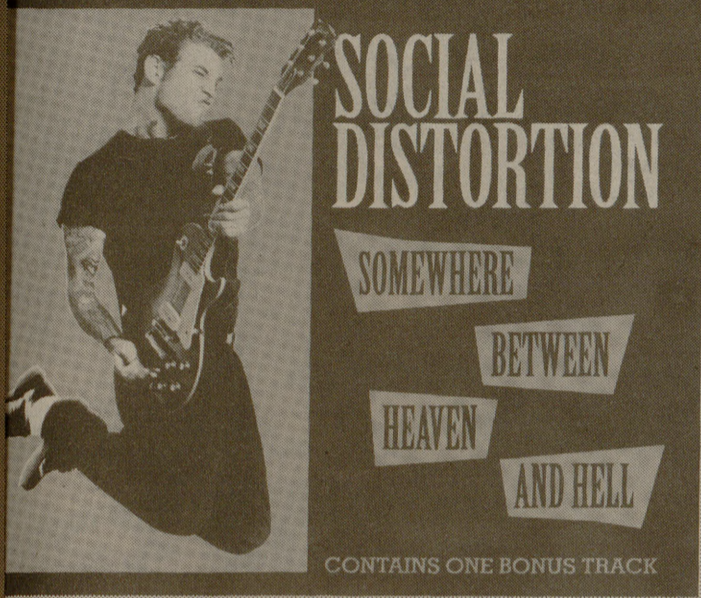
At several points in the film, individual characters try to understand life and why it is so great and so screwed up at the same time. People are poor while others are affluent, ba-

bies are born and neighbors die, thugs rob innocent bystanders but good men come to the rescue, lovers make promises but don't keep them - life is great and horrible at seemingly the same time.

Several shoot-from-the-hip philosophies are expounded, though none in-depth. Simon relates an individual's existence to the Grand Canyon - man seems humbled and virtually non-existent compared with the majesty of one of Earth's greatest natural wonders. Mack relates life to driving a car - you have to be fast or you'll get caught in the cross-stream.

And Davis, a producer of cheap action movies, says Mack should watch more movies, because the mysteries of life are explained in them.

While Kasdan's "Canyon" may not be able to explain all the mysteries of life, he definitely has the guts to say it's more complex than can be resolved in a two-hour film. And although the writing and story are somewhat uneven, "Grand Canyon" is often worth the view.



Music Review

Social Distortion brings back rock 'n' roll's rebellious spirit

By Kevin Robinson
The Battalion

Social Distortion
"Somewhere Between Heaven and Hell"
Epic

There's something about a Social Distortion song that makes you want open a cold brew, hop into your vintage Chevy, and take off for a cruise down the Pacific Coast Highway. For most of us it's not quite that easy, but with the punkabilly rock of "Somewhere Between Heaven and Hell," we've at least got a proper mood setter.

For the past decade, Social Distortion has memorialized the decadence of adolescent southern California in their songs. After making a name for themselves as one of the essential L.A. punk bands along with Black Flag, X, and T.S.O.L., the band released "Mommy's Little Monster," still considered a hardcore classic.

Soon after, however, singer Mike Ness began to live his own lyrics with a long chain of arrests and chronic heroin addiction. Most fans wrote the band off as washed up, just another example of how the same rock 'n' roll spirit that fires a band can cause their self destruction.

Ness surprised everyone, though, by making a comeback with new band members, a drug free life, and songs that looked back on his former lifestyle with regret instead of glorification. The

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SPRING INTERVIEW DATES:

FEBRUARY 20, 1992

(INTERNSHIP POSITIONS);

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