

MUSIC & MOVIE REVIEWS

Quirky characters refreshing in *Sleeping*

By Amber Clark THE BATTALION

While You Were Sleeping Starring Sandra Bullock, Bill Pullman, Peter Gallagher and Jack Warden Directed by Jon Turteltaub Rated PG Playing at Hollywood 16 ★★★★★ (out of five)

If life was simple, it certainly wouldn't be much fun.

Lucy (Sandra Bullock) often finds herself trapped in complex situations, but nothing can compare to what she is destined to experience.

For Lucy, life couldn't be more predictable. She has a cat, an apartment, a job in a Chicago Transit Authority token booth and a gut feeling that something is missing from her life.

The single highlight in her life is her love for the handsome man she sees every day at work. The only problem is — they've never met. When the stranger is mugged and falls in front of an oncoming train, Lucy saves his life.

Her fiasco begins. Rumors fly of Lucy being engaged to the stranger. When she finally gets to see her comatose beloved, Lucy learns the man's name is Peter (Peter Gallagher).

Since Peter is in a coma and cannot tell the family that Lucy has fabricated the engagement, Lucy never tells anyone the truth. As Lucy and the family grow closer, she finds herself even more reluctant to notify the family of her true identity. To complicate matters even more, Lucy finds herself falling in love with Peter's brother, Jack (Bill Pullman).

The characters' imperfections make the



Peter Gallagher and Sandra Bullock

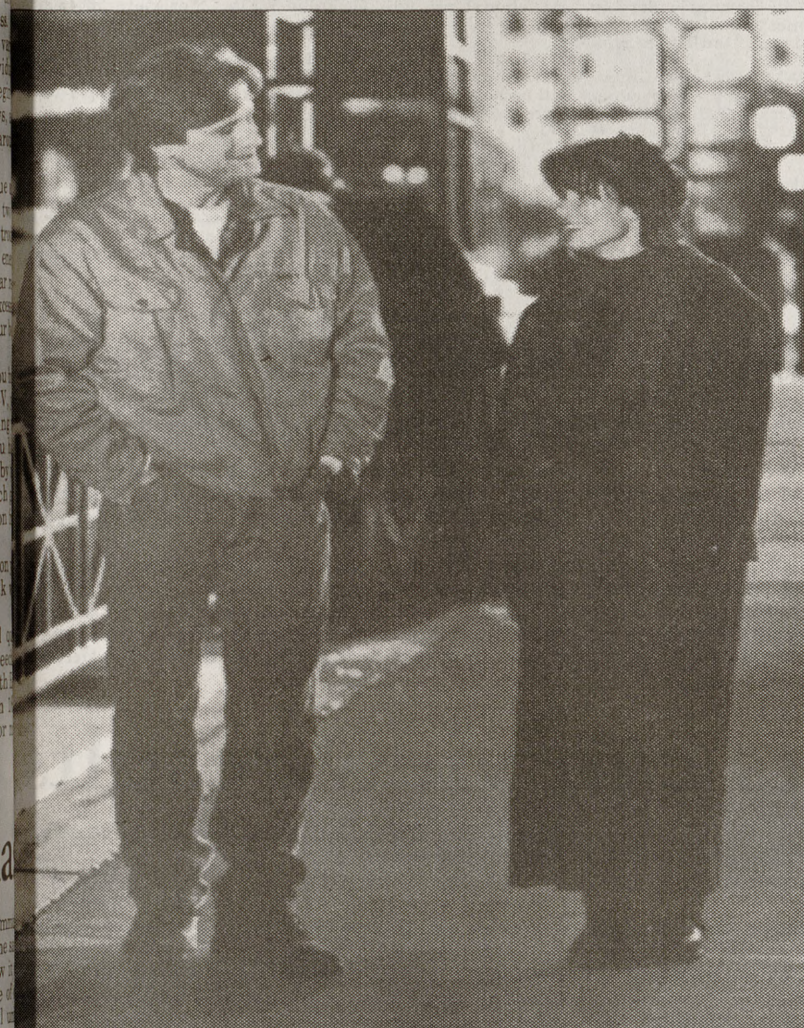
film quirky and down to earth. Bullock's narrative is filled with flaws, sounding much more like natural conversation than lines read from a script. The female audience may find it easy to identify with Lucy, who wears big sweaters, has messy hair and complains that most men are too busy looking for perfect women.

Anyone with a few odd family members can relate to Lucy's family. Mom is weepy, dad is too proud, auntie is crazy, and little sister seems trapped in the wrong person-

ality pool. Lucy's weirdness is what makes the whole group come together as one bizarre, campy family.

Even more refreshing is the lack of cussing, violence and sex. The most sexual encounter in the film is a kiss shared between Lucy and one of the men she loves.

Overall the film is enjoyable, different and a definite twist in typical Hollywood film production. It gives hope to all those who think they may never find love in such a seemingly predictable world.



Bill Pullman and Sandra Bullock star in *While You Were Sleeping*.

Hindered by hype

Rob Roy falls short of expectations

By Wes Swift THE BATTALION

Rob Roy Starring Liam Neeson, Jessica Lange Directed by Michael Caton-Jones Rated R Showing at Hollywood 16 and Schulman 6 ★★★ 1/2 (out of five)

The major problem with *Rob Roy* is in its plot. At times the plot sags, drawn out with a sparse dialogue and little action. Trailers for the movie seem to indicate that the film is action-packed, yet the small scraps of action are separated by vast seas of dialogue and landscape shots.

*Rob Roy* seems to be the victim of an overaggressive ad campaign. *Rob Roy* is heralded as a breathtaking film, but falls a few breaths short.

*Rob Roy* suffers from the same disease that has struck many recent films like *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, *Interview with the Vampire* and *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. It falls flat after larger-than-life trailers and advertisements.

*Rob Roy* is the legendary story of Robert Roy McGregor, played by Liam Neeson (*Schindler's List*, *Leap of Faith*). McGregor is a Scottish highlander caught between a corrupt nobility and a decaying society. The film focuses on McGregor's quest to retain his honor in a time when honor has meaning.

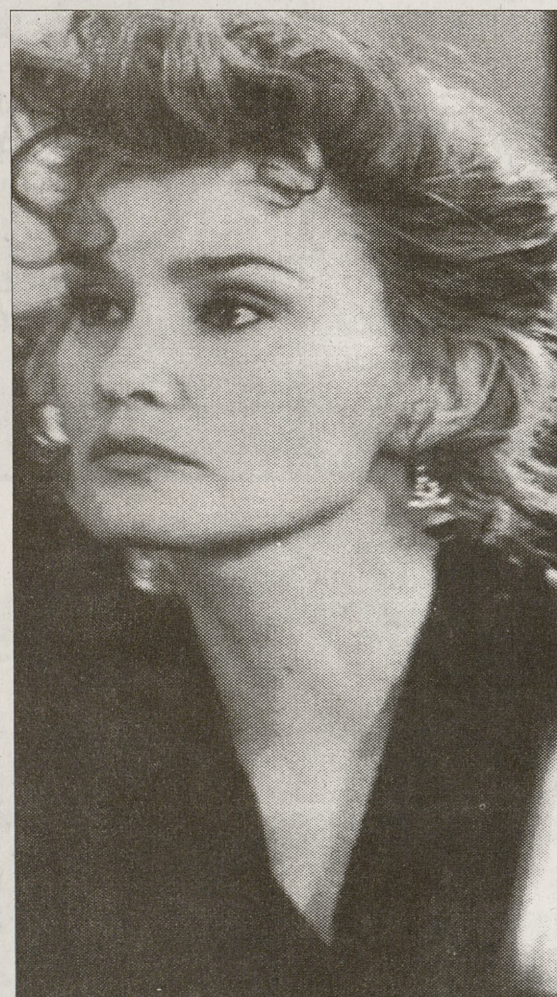
The film starts as McGregor receives a loan from his lord, the Marquis of Montrose. But McGregor never gets the money, thanks to Archibald Cunningham (played by Tim Roth), a young English aristocrat visiting the Montrose's estate who steals the money.

McGregor makes the situation worse by refusing to settle to Montrose's terms, and is branded an outlaw. McGregor takes to the hills to protect his family until everything blows over.

The film follows the McGregor's conflict with Cunningham and his quest to regain the honor of his name, his wife and his friend.

*Rob Roy* is filled with superb actors. Neeson's McGregor is believable, even if historical inaccuracies exist (The real Rob Roy was 5-foot-6 inches tall with flaming red hair; Neeson is 6-foot-5 inches tall with black hair). Oscar-winner Jessica Lange delivers the film's best performance as McGregor's wife, and Roth's Cunningham is an nice change of pace from his previous efforts in *Pulp Fiction* and *Reservoir Dogs*.

The cinematography is a character in itself. The vivid landscapes that fill each scene are powerful, making the production more genuine. The audience actually seems to be more preoccupied with the wonderful settings and forgets what is going on in the story.



Jessica Lange stars with Liam Neeson in *Rob Roy*.



Susan Werner croons away in *Last of the Good Straight Girls*.

Opera training evident in Werner's soulful debut

By Erin Hill THE BATTALION

Susan Werner Last of the Good Straight Girls Private Music ★★★ 1/2 (out of five)

Oh the chance of this happening.

To meet an artist destined for success before that success arrives. To say "I knew of Susan Werner before all her Grammy Awards, before the sold-out performances, before the gold albums." It is a rare thing to intercept an artist before the big-time hits, and recognize the potential success.

Werner, with her classically trained voice and music degrees from University of Iowa and Temple University, sings like a house of fire.

Her voice alone could send her to stardom. Armed with a guitar and her inventive songs, she just might be unstoppable.

The 29-year-old was training for a career in opera, but didn't feel satisfied, and kept turning to her guitar for solace. Finally, it hit her that her calling was with her acoustic rock songs, not Wagner or Puccini.

Though the classical music world may have lost big when Werner defected, the pop music business scored the coup of the year. Her debut album seems nearly flawless, and in many moments brilliant.

Take the torch song "St. Mary's of Regret." With insightful lyrics regarding the pain of relationships, like "You're married by now / She's kind, I suppose ... do you wonder why passion's always half impossibility / But lovers that we lose we never dare forget?"

But the song isn't just about good lyrics. Werner's voice is controlled, but soulful. She croons, just as you would expect someone with classical training, but adds some life as well.

The title track is a form of healing for Werner — similar to Tori Amos' "Me and a Gun," but without the overt angst. Werner sings about "A man she never planned to meet," a man who molests the subject of the song.

"Still Believe" tells the sad story of a marriage breaking up, and illusions being lost. But through it all, hope remains. No matter what, she still believes. And she still sings well, despite the pain. This voice just

doesn't give out.

It's easy to imagine that Werner would be great to see playing in a dark coffeehouse, with just a few feet between the audience and the stage.

Just like Annie Lennox on her new album *Medusa*, Werner covers Paul Simon's "Something So Right," though with a definite folksy flair versus Lennox's more techno sound.

Werner is another contemporary woman artist who is proudly picking up the banner of folk singer and carrying it with honor. Like Shawn Colvin, Nanci Griffith, Rickie Lee Jones and the ever-commanding Joni Mitchell, Werner isn't afraid to show her emotions, wear her heart on her sleeve or bare her soul through her music.

And like the folk act Indigo Girls, she isn't afraid to rock a little, even when she's acoustic.

In the title track, she sings, "And you say, 'Oh, where did the gentle women go?'"

Her career seems to answer that question, in part. She's one of those gentle women, but she's entering the music biz with a bang that's anything but.

Catherine Wheel revolves around disturbing distortion in latest release

By Erin Hill THE BATTALION

Catherine Wheel Happy Days Mercury Records ★★★ 1/2 (out of five)

A Catherine wheel is a firework, of the handheld variety, that spins rapidly before burning out. This particular type of firework was named after St. Catherine of Alexandria, who was an especially successful missionary among the Greeks during the third century.

There are three bands out right now with the name Catherine Wheel.

The one to be taken seriously hails from the England, and has been around the longest, and deserves the most attention. *Happy Days* is its third album, following the well-crafted *Ferment* and *Chrome*.

They play a curious brand of rock 'n' roll, a mix of heavy metal, alternative rock and U.K. blues. Throughout the album they remain edgy in their lyrics, singing and instrumentation.

Rob Dickinson is the lead vocalist and is also first cousin of Bruce Dickinson, ex-lead singer of Iron Maiden. The heavy metal connection isn't too difficult to imagine. Dickinson, though he can match angst with Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder, has a hard quality that

lifts him out of the '90s sensitive male category and into the hard rock spheres.

The band sounds best on tracks like "Shocking," because the vocals remain dominant despite the heavy guitar distortion.

Unfortunately, the band isn't always able to repeat the feat. Too many of the tracks sound muffled. Vocals are drowned out by drums, bass and guitar, and melodies are barely recognizable.

Neil Sims does an admirable job on percussion, and shines on tunes like "Hole," but his success comes at a price. Though the drums are good, the song is weak. Same with bassist Dave Hawes — his best songs, like "God Inside My Head," and "Judy Staring at the Sun," are not the best for

the band, simply because his bass is all the listener can focus on. It isn't enough of a team effort.

Comparisons to other U.K. bands like Slowdive and the Waterboys pop up after songs like "Love Tips Up," if the listener is still awake.

Despite Catherine Wheel's talent, the bulk of the songs on this album are snoozers, exercises in heavy percussion and guitar. Too often, this album makes you feel like you're standing outside the club, staring in through the windows at Catherine Wheel. The sound is muffled, the melodies lost.

Though their lack of obsession with an image is refreshing, and relative obscurity is charming, they ought to pay more attention to the blend of their songs. Too often the band members individual talents overshadow that of the band.

