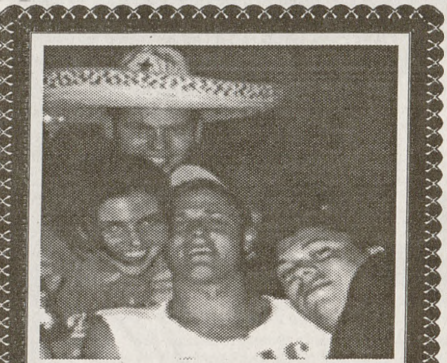


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**By Michael Landauer**  
 THE BATTALION  
**French Kiss**  
 Starring Meg Ryan, Kevin Kline and Timothy Hutton  
 Directed by Lawrence Kasdan  
 Rated PG-13  
 \*\*\* (out of five)

*French Kiss* has a lot of the same characteristics as *When Harry Met Sally*. Its characters are just like those in *Sleepless in Seattle*. Sometimes this film seems to be like those late '80s movies about the American lost in Europe who gets caught up in intrigue. But one thing *French Kiss* lacks is originality.

The movie starts with Kate (Meg Ryan) and her fiancée, Charlie (Timothy Hutton), appearing to be very much in love. But the audience gets obvious clues that Charlie is not comfortable with settling down.

He goes on a business trip to Paris and leaves Kate, who is afraid to fly, behind. Kate gets a phone call from a very drunk Charlie who tells her that he has fallen in love with someone else and will not be coming home.

Kate overcomes her fear of flying and sets out to win back her fiancée.

As Kate sits on the plane hysterically anticipating take-off, a Frenchman (Kevin Kline) argues with a stewardess about his seating assignment.

The audience is supposed to assume that the botched assignment is some kind of fate, and Kate gets thrust into a slightly tangled web of intrigue. The Frenchman, Luc, hides some stolen property in Kate's bag during the flight to get it through customs.

While the plane takes off, Kate and Luc have their first of many dialogues which serve as the window dressing for an uninspired plot. They jump right into personal conversations with Luc assuming that Kate is afraid to live life.

The movie pulls the audience in several directions when the plane lands. Kate gets dumped onto foreign soil and thrown into a series of mishaps.

There is a chase scene of sorts when Luc hurries Kate across town to find a thief who has stolen her bag, and consequently, Luc's stowaway belongings.

The problem with this chase scene is that there does not appear to be any ur-



Meg Ryan and Kevin Kline star as characters chasing impossible dreams in *French Kiss*.

gency. Luc knows exactly who stole her bag, and no police are in pursuit of the stolen car he is driving.

But when Kate and Luc reach the thief's apartment, only 20 minutes later, he is relaxing, and all of Kate's belongings have been sold or given away.

This is a definite direction flaw, but apparently someone really wanted a scene with Kline driving wildly through the streets of Paris.

The highlight of the movie is watching Kate's and Luc's relationship evolve. At first, Luc is just using Kate to get back his belongings, but they realize they're both pitiful people longing for impossible dreams, and they form a predictable bond.

Audiences enjoyed watching Ryan play Sally to Billy Crystal's Harry. They were also enthusiastic when Sally's character was resurrected and renamed Annie to fall for Tom Hanks in *Sleepless in Seattle*.

Now audiences have the chance to watch the character, whatever the name, fall for Luc. At least the male characters have had some variation.

Ryan does a good job in *French Kiss*, she should — she's already played the same character twice before.

The sad thing is that, in other movies, audiences have seen what Ryan can do. But she should bury the typecast and break out of the romantic comedy genre.

While this movie travels slowly toward the fairly predictable climax, it does offer some entertainment. There are some quirky moments that make the slow pace bearable, but the entertainment does not come from the plot.

*French Kiss* is cute and clever, but in comparison to other romantic comedies, it's unimpressive. As entertained as audiences may be with the dialogue between Ryan and Kline, they will not see anything new.

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