

WATERWORLD

Expensive production fails with plot that doesn't hold water

MOVIE REVIEW

Waterworld
Starring: Kevin Costner, Tina Majorino, Dennis Hopper
Directed by Kevin Reynolds
Rated PG-13
Playing at Schulman 6
★★★ (out of five)



By Wes Swift
THE BATTALION

The reason for the hype on *Waterworld*, Kevin Costner's newest film, is that the budget-busting \$175 million production just may send Costner's once-burgeoning career to a watery grave. But actually, if you disregard the big price tag, *Waterworld* isn't a half-bad flick. In *Waterworld*, the polar ice caps have melted, covering the earth with water. People live on floating, man-made "atolls" and are under the constant threat

from the Smokers, a band of cigarette-sucking pirates led by the Deacon (Dennis Hopper). Dirt is a precious commodity, and the only hope in people's lives lies in a mythical place called Dryland. Costner plays the Mariner, a sea-going drifter who scavenges the ocean floor for goods he can trade. One step higher on the evolutionary ladder, the Mariner is a "mutation" adapted for his watery lifestyle with gills and webbed feet. His fishy physique gains him a few enemies during a trading

excursion to a nearby atoll. The mariner lands in jail and receives a death sentence. Before the mariner meets his maker, the Smokers raid the atoll, looking for Enola (Tina Majorino), a young girl who can shed light on the mystery of Dryland. But before the pirates snag the her, Enola and her mother, Helen (Jeanne Tripplehorn) free the Mariner and escape while the Smokers continue to pursue. *Waterworld*, as one might expect, is a breathtaking film. Filmed entirely on or under water, the movie has been billed in a press release as "the most ambitious production in the history of cinema," and, production-wise, it delivers. The film's big-name cast turned in solid performances. Costner is believable as an action star. Tina Majorino's Enola is fantastic, mixing the child-like attitude with the fireball courage needed to stand up to the Mariner. Dennis Hopper puts in his same over-the-top performance that audiences expect. However, the strong produc-

tion and good acting are wasted on a watered-down plot. The filmmakers try to rely on outstanding scenery and hope the storyline can keep from drowning, but it doesn't. The writers resort to movie clichés that would kill less visual, movies. This is no more apparent than in the token, irrelevant romance between the Mariner and Helen. The film doesn't need the relationship, but it's there anyway. More of the production money should have gone to a search for better writers. It would have made the film a lot more entertaining. Ultimately, *Waterworld's* scenes swim, but its story sinks.



The Net offers chilling, eerie adventure



Angela Bennett (Sandra Bullock) has her life erased when she stumbles onto the Internet path of people plotting to control "the Net."

By Jay Robbins
THE BATTALION

The Net gathers many of the troubling questions raised by "information age" dependence on computer systems and ties them into a fresh, gripping plot. Lonely freelance computer hacker Angela Bennett stumbles into a dark corner of the world's computer systems. The terrorist group whose conspiracy she accidentally uncovers deletes all traces of her identity, from drug prescriptions to the deed to her house. Suddenly, she no longer exists. Sandra Bullock plays Bennett, a shy, introverted computer programming analyst who works out of her house and rarely leaves it. Just before taking her first vacation in six years, Bennett receives a program from one of her clients that allows a frightening level of access to highly secured systems.

MOVIE REVIEW

The Net
Starring Sandra Bullock, Jeremy Northam and Dennis Miller
Directed by Irwin Winkler
Rated PG-13
Showing at Hollywood 16, Schulman 6
★★★ 1/2 (out of five)



Bennett knows better than to snoop where she doesn't belong, but she unwittingly taps into a shocking plot to take control of the government's computer networks. And the Praetorians, the group that wrote the program, will do whatever it takes to make sure Bennett cannot reveal its plans. *The Net* gets off to an unfortunately slow start. The film spends too much time setting up the story, perhaps because

of fears that audiences might not understand the computer concepts without extensive, simplistic explanation of "the Net." The movie is also weighed down by the secondary storyline of Bennett's loneliness, and by a long, unnecessary romantic episode. But after *The Net* finally gets on-line, audiences can quit fidgeting and really enjoy the film. Bullock turns in a solid and believable performance as a computer nerd who clicked on the wrong icon. *The Net* allows Bullock to stretch her acting talents further than before, though Angela Bennett still will remind viewers of Bullock's *Speed* and *While You Were Sleeping* roles. Comedian and satirist Dennis

Miller plays the surprisingly subdued Dr. Alan Champion, Bennett's former psychiatrist and one-time lover, who tries to pull Bennett out of the limbo the Praetorians cause when they erase her computer identity. British stage actor Jeremy Northam, in his first major American screen role, inspires highly believable unease as he slowly cuts Bennett off from everything and everyone who ever knew her. Despite good performances, the screenplay gives only Bullock enough air-time and depth to really develop her character beyond being a "good guy" or a "bad guy," a shortfall that leaves the movie a little flat. *The Net* may predict a real danger facing the modern computer-run world. The idea is the most fascinating part of the film, and audiences leave with a satisfyingly eerie question, "What if someone did take control of the net?"

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