

How To Make An

American Quilt

Touching story and powerful acting blend to make dynamic film



Anna (Dr. Maya Angelou), a master quilter and founder of the Grasse Quilting Bee, shares a humorous moment with Finn (Winona Ryder) and Hy (Ellen Burstyn) in *How to Make an American Quilt*.

By Amy Uptmor
THE BATTALION

Chick flicks come and go. Every year there has to be some movie that we bond with our mothers over, drag our dates to, cry over and eat chocolate ice cream while watching with our best girlfriends.

We've had our *Steel Magnolias*. We've had our *Boys on the Side*.

But rarely does a chick flick come along of epic proportions with a cast of legendary actresses, an intricate, symbolic storyline and, most importantly, a lack of bitterness and divorce.

How To Make An American Quilt is that movie.

Winona Ryder plays Finn, a Berkeley graduate student who spends the summer with her grandmother and friends to think about an impending marriage and to work on her thesis.

All the women in her grandmother's quilting club have a story to tell, each of which is incorporated into a square on the quilt they are making for Finn's wedding.

The quilt, as can be imagined, has symbolic meaning that guides the movie, as do each of the stories the women tell. The overlying theme of the movie is tied into the art of

quilting — "Self-expression heals a wounded heart."

The movie has a lot of symbolism. It has warm, fuzzy moments. It has female bonding at its finest. But there's more to this movie that makes it a cut above ordinary movies.

For starters, the storyline transcends the ordinary chick flick mode. The story is good enough to be enjoyed by husbands, boyfriends, children and grandparents.

It does not harp on how men are the root of all evil. Rather, it is a story about growing up, changing and learning to find happiness.

The movie also has an extraordinary cast. Ryder is wonderful in her lead role, but she is often in the shadows of her older, wiser counterparts, Anne Bancroft and Kate Nelligan, who play her great aunt and grandmother, respectively.

And what could make more sense than to have Maya Angelou, one of the greatest storytellers of the twentieth century, playing an integral part in a movie that weaves together story after story.

Angelou plays Anna, the master quilter whose guidance makes every quilt a master-

MOVIE REVIEW

How to Make an American Quilt
Starring Winona Ryder, Anne Bancroft, Maya Angelou, Ellen Burstyn and Kate Nelligan
Directed by Jocelyn Moorhouse
Rated PG-13
Playing at Hollywood 16
★★★★ 1/2 (out of five)

piece. Likewise, her story is the thread that binds the movie together. Angelou's storytelling — combined with her outstanding acting — elevates the movie to classic proportions.

The 20-something crowd that this movie will likely attract will get an added bonus.

Claire Danes and Jared Leto, stars of the short-lived but popular television series *My So-Called Life*, both have small roles in *American Quilt*.

Both do an excellent job of injecting their charm, not to mention their gifted acting skills, into this movie.

Guys should not run in fear from this movie. This is a movie that all people can equally enjoy and find meaning in.

How To Make An American Quilt is not a typical chick flick, but has what it takes to become an American classic.

To Die For succeeds in showing sudden fame's corrupting nature

By Amy Protas
THE BATTALION

MOVIE REVIEW

To Die For
Starring Nicole Kidman, Matt Dillon and Joaquin Phoenix
Directed by Gus Van Sant
Rated R
Playing at Hollywood 16
★★★★ 1/2 (out of five)

What does a person have to do to be famous in America? Just ask Susan Smith or O.J. Simpson.

By committing or being implicated in a murder, they instantly became media icons.

In his newest film, *To Die For*, director Gus Van Sant unleashes a satirical attack on the media and the United States' obsession with it.

The timing of the release of this film could not be better. With the country still reeling from the Simpson verdict, Van Sant offers a look at the ridiculous attention we lavish on the famous

and infamous. He accomplishes what Oliver Stone couldn't with *Natural Born Killers*.

Nicole Kidman, proving she can act, stars as Suzanne Stone Maretto. Suzanne is blinded by ambition and will do anything to be on TV.

She starts out by getting a weather girl spot at her local cable station, but this is not enough. Suzanne always has her eye on what she calls "the big picture." She will let nothing stand in the way of her dream of one day being on a major television network.

Beautiful and driven, Suzanne seems capable of obtaining her vision. There is not much upstairs, but she overcomes that with good looks. There is only one problem — Suzanne's husband, Larry. Played by Matt Dillon, Larry loves Suzanne and wants to start a family. Suzanne realizes she can't ruin her most important asset, her beauty, by getting pregnant and gaining weight. So instead of telling Larry how she feels or leaving him, she has him killed.

One of the funniest but saddest aspects of the film is how blind everyone is. To accomplish the murder, Suzanne enlists the help of three adoring high school students. None of them, including Suzanne, realize how ridiculous and solvable the crime will be.

The film is perfectly cast. Kidman is great as she delivers Suzanne's vapidly with dead-pan hilarity.

To Die For combines elements from Van Sant's past movies. It has the dark humor from *Drugstore Cowboy* and the sense of the pathetic from *My Own Private Idaho*. Thankfully, nothing in this film resembles the horrible *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*.

The scariest part of the film is how similar it is to real life. Resembling a documentary, every-

one gives their opinion on "what really happened." Suzanne's and Larry's parents appear on a talk show, and Suzanne makes a video tape of her side of the story.

Sound familiar?

Another solid point is that the film is perfectly cast. Kidman is great as she delivers Suzanne's vapidly with dead-pan hilarity.

Joaquin Phoenix, one of the high school students, evokes sympathy and disdain as he is naively drawn into Suzanne's web.

Illeana Douglas plays Larry's sister and is the only one who sees Suzanne's true character.

She shows bitterness and rage while mixing in subtle sarcasm as she shoots Suzanne down with every line. From the beginning, she's the lone dissenter who has to patiently wait for vindication.

To Die For shines a telling light on the fact that the line between our heroes and people with values society deprecates has become almost non-existent.



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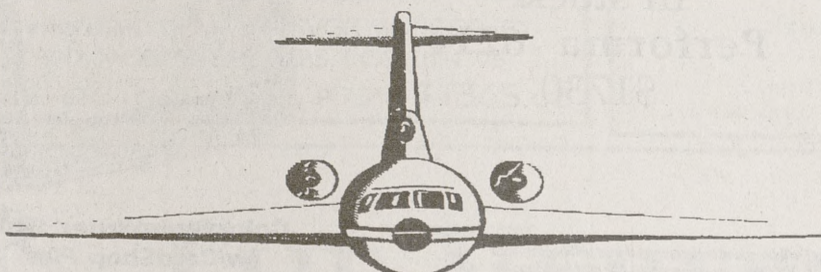
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