

# AGGIElife

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## Poor acting, subplots ruin *Primal Fear*

**MOVIE REVIEW**  
**Primal Fear**  
Starring Richard Gere, Laura Linney and Edward Norton  
Directed by Gregory Hoblit  
Rated R  
Playing at Hollywood 16  
★ 1/2 (out of five)

By Rachel Barry  
THE BATTALION

In the case of *Primal Fear vs. audiences*, the verdict is in. Richard Gere is guilty of making another pointless, pathetic movie.

The film follows hot-shot attorney Martin Vail (Gere) on the case of Aaron Stampler (Edward Norton), an altar boy accused of butchering an archbishop in Chicago.

Vail ends up defending his case against former lover Janet Venable (Laura Linney) and is about to lose when a new twist in the form of an additional personality comes into play. It seems Stampler has more than one voice in his head, and Vail has one last chance to win the case.

This so-called courtroom drama is anything but dramatic and falls more toward the sloppy side.

Numerous subplots make the main vein of the film hard to follow.

Gere's character is wrapped up in a multitude of other issues, including his affair with the prosecuting attorney in the case, and trying to keep his image up despite the fact that a former defendant ended up at the bottom of a river.

At one point, Vail even hints at some dark flaw in his past, yet never makes mention of it again.

These little side roads add nothing to the storyline and are distracting from the only truly good part of the film — Norton's wicked effect on the audience.

Norton, who makes his feature film debut in *Primal Fear*, gives a performance that is the sole piece of entertainment to be found in the movie.

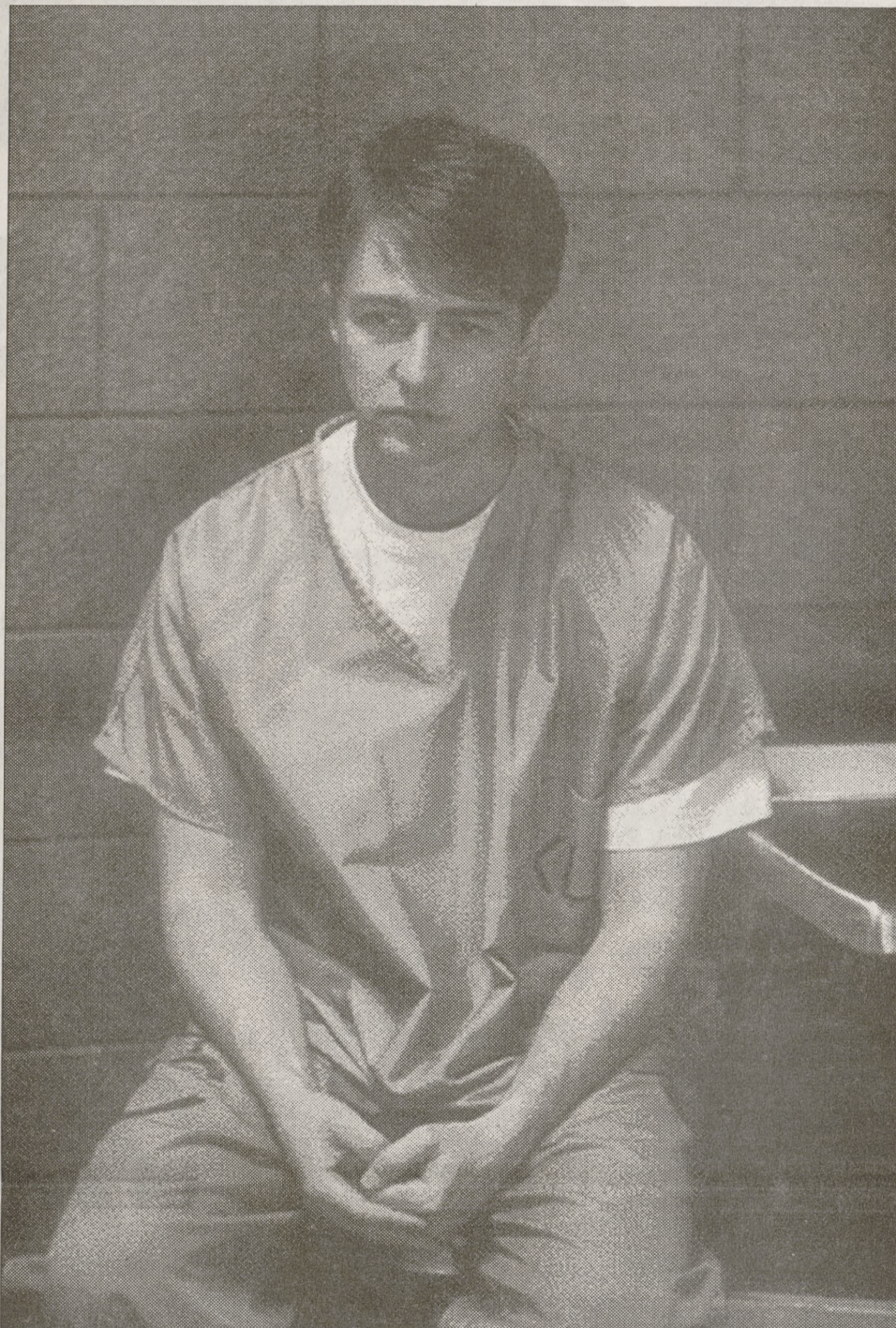
His ability to switch from the slow-speaking, stuttering Stampler to his fierce, abusive alternate personality, Roy, and back again is extremely convincing and amazing to watch. His smile has the ability to be gentle and crazed at almost the same instant.

The only drawback to his performance is that it had to be buried among the clutter of *Primal Fear*.

Gere is his usual cliché self, bringing nothing solid to the film.

His character is a fast-talking, phrase-slinging, arrogant lawyer who has a habit of leaning forward when he is talking to people as if to add some substance to his commentary.

Instead, he ends up being nothing more



Edward Norton (Aaron Stampler) is accused of murdering an archbishop in *Primal Fear*.

than a pretty face for a static character.

His romance with Venable has little if any chemistry. Linney's performance as the hard-working prosecuting attorney is hollow and weak.

Her attempt to portray a chain smoker is hard to believe.

Every time she lights up, she looks

like a teen-ager trying to smoke behind her parents' backs. Her lines are forced and shallow, as is most of the material in the movie.

*Primal Fear* is in need of a good fine tuning. Its superfluous plot lines and plastic characters make the case for a good film weak at best.

## Psychological thriller evokes *Fear* in audience



Reese Witherspoon and Mark Wahlberg star in *Fear*.

**MOVIE REVIEW**  
**Fear**  
Starring Mark Wahlberg, Reese Witherspoon and William Peterson  
Directed by James Foley  
Rated R  
Playing at Hollywood 16  
★★★ (out of five)

By Kristina Buffin  
THE BATTALION

Disturbing is the only word that can describe a truly bizarre, yet good psychological thriller.

Nicole Walker (Reese Witherspoon) is a 16-year-old who is rebelling against a father whom she thinks abandoned her when her parents were divorced. Nicole meets David (Mark Wahlberg) at a rave one night, and he woos her with his sensitivity and polite manners. However, Nicole gets more than she bargained for.

Nicole's first sign that David is not what he pretended to be is when he kicks Nicole's friend Gary (Todd Caldecott) in a jealous rage because David thought Gary was coming on to Nicole.

From this point on, it is obvious David is missing a few marbles, and his obsession to have Nicole, at any cost only proliferates.

Steve Walker (William Peterson) is the protective father who knows from the beginning that David is not the caring, polite individual Nicole sees. In fact, he finds

out David is an orphan who has been bounced around by the system and has a criminal record. It becomes Steve's mission to keep David out of Nicole's life, no matter what the cost.

Wahlberg does a superb job of portraying the obviously mentally unbalanced David. There is something about his eyes and the looks he gives

that can make anyone shiver from fear.

Although this is only Wahlberg's third film, he performs like a veteran. He is able to make David seem charming, yet he can turn the character into a psychopath.

Perhaps what makes this movie work is the combination of sound and imagery. With songs like "Machinehead" and "Come-down" by Bush and The Sundays' "Wild Horses," it only intensifies the scenes between David and Nicole.

The suspense thriller keeps audience members on the edges of their seats. You never know what David may do next to get Nicole, and you never know when he will finally snap and go absolutely berserk.

The ending is perfect for this movie. It leaves the audience with the feeling of "Wow, what just happened?"

## Flirting with *Disaster* filled with chaotic humor

**MOVIE REVIEW**  
**Flirting with Disaster**  
Starring Ben Stiller, Patricia Arquette and Tea Leoni  
Directed by David O. Russell  
Rated R  
Playing at Hollywood 16  
★★★★ (out of five)

By Wes Swift  
THE BATTALION

Watching *Flirting with Disaster* is like watching a Generation X version of *America's Funniest Home Videos*: half of you wants to believe that everything happening is too crazy to be true, but the other half is more than certain that it is.

Overflowing with chaotic plot twists and subtle humor, the frenzied *Flirting with Disaster* is the tale of one man searching for the lost part of his life.

Ben Stiller plays Mel Copland, a 20-something-approaching-30-something who jaunts off across the country with his wife, Nancy (Patricia Arquette), and social services worker, Tina (Tea Leoni), in search of his real parents.

Mel feels so incomplete because he doesn't know his real parents that he won't even give his new child a name.

But what begins as a quest to find his past turns into chaos as the trio zigzags through a wild goose chase filled with misinformation and bum lead after bum lead.

And when Mel finally finds his true parents, the entire story becomes even more warped.

Director David O. Russell deftly mixes the over-the-top plot twists and subtle laughs throughout the film's 92 minutes.

The laughs are gutbusters, granted, but more chuckles come from the back of your mind because you just can't believe that each mishap is smothered by another, funnier mishap.

The film also has a fair share of bril-



(from left) Lily Tomlin, Alan Alda and Glenn Fitzgerald star in *Flirting with Disaster*.

liant one-liners.

When Lonnie, Mel's brother who wasn't given up for adoption, gets fed up with his parents' (played wonderfully by Lily Tomlin and Alan Alda) stories, he blurts out the funniest line in the movie, "Jerry Garcia! Blah! Blah! Blah!"

Stiller, Arquette and Leoni, while giving good performances, are eclipsed by the peanut gallery of supporting characters.

George Segal and Mary Tyler Moore are superb as Mel's neurotic, adoptive parents,

and Alda and Tomlin brilliantly play Mel's goofy real parents with a shady past.

The script's hectic pace doesn't allow audiences to snag a quick breath between laughs.

In fact, its high-speed energy is the film's strongest asset and adds to the almost suffocating chaos.

In the end, audiences probably should take a respirator or a pacemaker to get through *Flirting with Disaster*, or they may be flirting with disaster themselves.

## White hits sophomore slump with new album

**ALBUM REVIEW**  
**Bryan White**  
**Between Now and Forever**  
Asylum Records  
★★ (out of five)



There are a few highlights in this otherwise lackluster album. The single that has been released, "Between Now and Forever," is White's one shot at reclaiming the glory he achieved with his first smash, "Someone Else's Star."

It tells the story of a girl he's not wishing for, but wants to spend eternity with.

Another highlight is "A Hundred and One." It is a toe-tapping, new generation country song that just feels good. The steel guitar and rocking beat are a pleasant surprise after all of the other mediocre tunes on the album.

It seems as if this second effort did not receive the type of attention that the first album did, and it remains to be seen if the momentum from White's first release can be maintained throughout his junior and senior years.

It appears as if the album was just meant to capitalize on the Bryan White name, but clearly, he is going to have to put in a little more elbow grease at the recording studio if he wants to move from "up-and-coming" country talent into a full-blown Nashville star.

Whether he becomes the next Billy Ray Cyrus (one-hit wonder... for those of you who have forgotten him already) or a household name like Garth Brooks is up in the air, but the Billy Ray option seems more likely at this point.

By Will Hickman  
THE BATTALION

Bryan White is back with a new album after his immensely successful debut effort — the eponymous *Bryan White*. However, despite the fanfare, he seems to have fallen into the sophomore slump, and sadly, *Between Now and Forever* has little to offer a listener.

His clichéd topics of "lamenting love lost" and "following the girl wherever she goes" on the first half of the album tend to bore, but for some reason, he saves the few "good" songs for the end of the album.

The first song, "Sittin' on Go," has a rather quirky beat, average verses, but great harmonies in the chorus. From there, White next sings "Still Life," a song about the one that got away. Good story, but the song is just too slow.

Another disappointment, "I'm Not Supposed to Love You Anymore," is a love dirge where the narrator expresses, with woe-filled angst, the difficulty in getting over his lost love.

It is a decent piece, but the deep depression the listener has already been plunged into due to the other songs makes this one hard to stomach.