

# Garden heralds good and bad of Eastwood

## Movie Review

*Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*  
Starring **John Cusack**  
and **Kevin Spacey**  
Directed by **Clint Eastwood**  
Playing at Hollywood 16  
★★★ (out of five)

**M**idnight in the Garden of Good and Evil tries to coast by on Southern hospitality, but ends up overstaying its welcome. *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* is based on the best-selling book of the same name. It is the non-fiction account of a murder trial in Savannah, Ga., and the town's quirky residents. The film boasts many strong points, but the weaknesses end up ruining what could have been an

excellent movie.

The movie begins with reporter John Kelso (John Cusack) traveling to Savannah in hopes of writing an article on Jim Williams' (Kevin Spacey) annual Christmas party.

Instead, Kelso finds himself embroiled in scandal as Williams is charged with murdering his gay lover. In an effort to get the story, he becomes an informal member of Williams' defense team, which is led by down-home lawyer Sonny Seiler (Jack Thompson).

The acting in the film is superb for the most part. Spacey and Thompson's Southern accents are on the money. Thompson almost steals the show as a "Matlock"-ian defense attorney.

John Cusack is his reliable self and adds an every-man presence to his character.

Lady Chablis, a local drag queen, is entertaining with his/her "Rupaul-esque" antics. This cocky she-male garners laughs with almost every seen he/she is in.

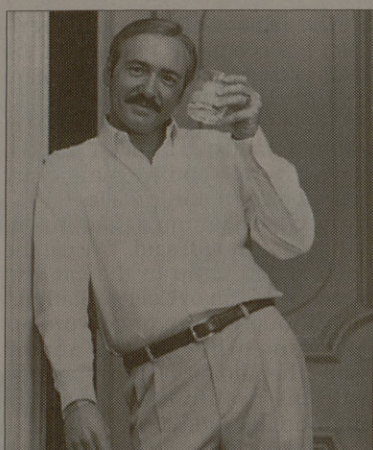
The main problem lies with the writing and directing of *Midnight*.

The script is too scattershot, as it tries to introduce as many crazy characters as possible. It is like watching an episode of the "Gong Show," where each person tries to top the other with wacky antics.

In the book, the medley of characters works to its advantage. In the movie, this mix diminishes the leads to the point where the audience doesn't care about anybody, which is a shame considering the actors involved.

There are some light-hearted moments. However, the point where the movie falters is when it tries for a sort of pseudo-mysticism. The scenes ring false and feel like a rejected "Twin Peaks" episode.

Eastwood is a great director, but it seems as if he was sleepwalking through this one. The cinematography is very uninspired considering the Georgia locales where it was shot. The movie lacks the emotional punch of *Unforgiven*.



**Kevin Spacey** stars in the new drama *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* could have been as tantalizing as a fresh Georgia peach, but instead, it is more like canned peaches — good, but there is much better.

—By Travis Irby

## Music Review

# Blasters from the past re-release first album to rock '90s music



**The Blasters**  
*American Music*  
Hightone Records  
★★★★ 1/2 (out of five)

**A**mong the rock bands that emerged from the Los Angeles scene in the '80s, the Blasters were the most "roots-

conscious," producing a sound that took influences from rockabilly, hillbilly and R&B. The band actually formed in the late '70s and released its first album, *American Music*, in 1980.

The CD reissue of the Blaster's debut album sounds as refreshing as it did 17 years ago. The album sounds as if it could have been cut in Elvis' Sun studios in Memphis in 1955.

The band's tight rhythm section has each song swinging, and listeners will find it nearly impossible to stop the tapping of their feet while listening. Dave Alvin's rockabilly guitar licks and brother Phil's wail round out the Blaster's sound.

The songs on *American Music* are exactly what the title says.

Alvin's lyrics deal with love, heartbreak and prison.

The Buddy Holly-like "Marie, Marie" is one of the best songs no one has heard. The songs' raved-up tempo and catchy guitar riffs lead the way for two minutes of rocking.

"Barefoot Rock" features a slapstick rhythm section, and is another great fast-paced tune. The band works a fine R&B groove on "Flat Top Joint," and Phil Alvin delivers country yodel in the locomotive "Never No More Blues."

The CD reissue also includes six additional tracks that did not appear on the original record. The new songs mix in well with the original songs and do not sound out-of-place.

Although the album was originally released in 1980, it is a "new" release for mainstream audiences. Less than 2,000 copies of the original LP were released, and it has been out of print since.

This album is an excellent pickup for fans of the band and a great introduction for anyone who likes rockabilly music in general. The disc maintains the warm sound of the original vinyl, and the liner notes are a nice touch. This disc reminds us that some of the best music made cannot be heard on the radio.

—By Robert Smith

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