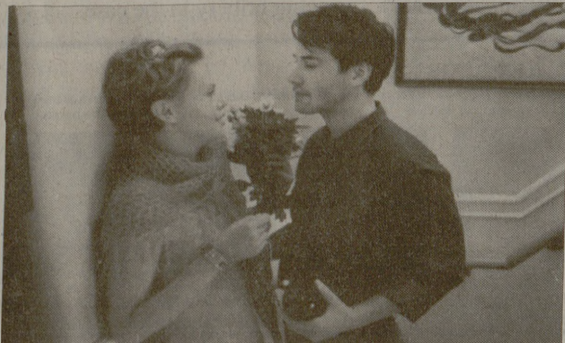


REEL CRITIQUE

MOVIE REVIEWS



Sweet November
Starring Keanu Reeves and Charlize Theron
Directed by Pat O'Connor

Sweet November is the most achingly romantic film of recent times. Fresh and touching, filled with gifted performances, this movie creates a desire within the audience to love and be loved by someone. Considering the film's release date (immediately after Valentine's Day), there could be no better film to see with a date at this time of the year. If you are not in love before this film starts, you very well could be by the time the credits begin to roll.

Superficially similar to last year's *Autumn in New York*, this film is nothing like *New York*. Whereas *New York* was false and pretentious, every frame of *November* rings true and powerful.

Nelson Moss (Reeves) is a workaholic advertising executive on the top of his game until his entire world crumbles. Intrigued by an offer from a beautiful young woman he met at the Department of Motor Vehicles, Moss decides to take Sara Deever (Theron) up on the offer. He must spend an entire month with her so that she can teach him how to live. Their month together is an emotional journey for which neither one was prepared.

Superbly written by Kurt Voelker, every character is given wonderful eccentricities that Theron and Reeves bring to life with fascinating results. Generally bashed for his acting talents, Reeves delivers yet another in a recent string of excellent performances. His role is executed to perfection with several subtle nuances that many people will probably overlook.

Theron finally lands a role befitting her talents. Many years have passed since a female character was played with such strength and tragic vulnerability, such gusto and subtlety. It is a pure pleasure to watch her work.

Directed with a sure hand by O'Connor (*Circle of Friends*), this movie is beautifully paced with nice rhythm that fits both the story and the stars. O'Connor knows how to tug at the audience's heartstrings, and it will be a cold person who is not moved by this amazing movie.

Sweet November is a rare and magnificent achievement in film. This is not a movie targeted toward critics or toward movie snobs who like only art-house or strikingly original films. These people will be prone to dismiss this film, but it will be their mistake.

No, this is a movie that is targeted for the average moviegoer — the sort of person whose life will truly be made a little better for having watched it. *November* is

definitely sweet, but its greatest achievement is the depth at which it touches the human heart. (Grade: A)

—Matt McCormick



Down to Earth
Starring Chris Rock and Regina King
Directed by Chris Weitz and Paul Weitz

Down to Earth is a moderately funny movie, that sadly only seems to find its pace whenever Chris Rock is doing a stand-up routine. Rock only performs those routines about four times in the whole movie. That said, one might wonder if they could just stay at home and watch a rerun of Rock's HBO specials, and the answer is yes.

Based on Warren Beatty's film *Heaven Can Wait*, this movie follows the story of young comedian Lance Barton (Rock), who dies suddenly after playing the Apollo 10 to bad reviews. Upon his arrival in heaven, it is discovered that a mistake was made and he was not supposed to die for another 40-plus years. In an attempt to make things right, Mr. King (Chazz Palminteri) offers Barton the chance to go back to Earth in a different body.

Barton jumps at the chance since he is determined to play the Apollo one last time and get the laughs that he thinks he deserves. The deal is sweetened when he is reincarnated into the body of the 15th richest man in America. The problem is that his new body is white and old, two things he is not. This is going to make it hard to get to the Apollo.

That simple fact is the basis for much of the film's jokes, which manage to wear thin very quickly, along with the rest of the movie. The drama in the story is not very dramatic, the love story is not very involved and the supporting characters are one-dimensional and dull. Nothing clicks in this film except for Rock's comic ability.

The film is poorly directed by the brothers (Chris and Paul Weitz) of *American Pie* fame, who seem more than content to just let all of these flat scenes play without any interest whatsoever to actually creating a quality picture.

Rock, who also co-wrote and executive produced this project, should really stick to doing stand-up, which he can do better than anyone else out there right now. As far as audiences are concerned, his last special, "Bigger and Blacker," is time better spent. (Grade: C-)

—Matt McCormick

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Sat.: 10:30 a.m. (Korean)
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Sat.: 5:30 p.m. (English), 7:00 p.m. (Spanish)
Sun.: 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 5:30 p.m., 7:00 p.m.
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