



ON THE BIG SCREEN

"The Butterfly Effect"
New Line Cinema
Starring Ashton Kutcher and Amy Smart



PHOT COURTESY OF NEW LINE CINEMA

Ashton Kutcher plays Evan Treborn, who is plagued with repressed memories, and tries to fix the present by going back in time.

The Chaos Theory, used as the basis for the film "The Butterfly Effect" is exemplified by the following scenario: With one butterfly's flap of a wing, a typhoon can eventually ravage Asia. "The Butterfly Effect" derives its name not only from the aforementioned classic philosophical theory, but also from a short story by Ray Bradbury in which a time traveler creates a mess out of history by killing a butterfly during the prehistoric era.

Helmed by writers-turned-directors Eric Bress and J. Mackye Lubber, the writing team behind "Final Destination 2," "The Butterfly Effect," starring Ashton Kutcher in a surprisingly well-played role, quickly turns into a highly-entertaining popcorn-flick that comes close to being an excellent psychological thriller.

In a classic episode of "The Simpsons," Grandpa Simpson gives Homer some advice on his wedding day: "If you ever travel back in time, don't step on anything ... because even the tiniest change can alter the future in ways you can't imagine." If only Evan Treborn (Kutcher) had been given that same bit of advice, he would have been a much happier time traveler.

After the first half-hour of the movie, audiences will be in no position to dispute Treborn's claims that he had a rotten childhood. From being a victim of child pornography to having his dog killed by a sadistic friend, Treborn's happy childhood memories are few and far between. Of course, that's excluding the portions of it he doesn't remember. Since childhood, Treborn has been afflicted with blackouts that have left chunks of his life unaccounted for. To remedy this problem, Treborn's psychologist recommends he write journals that may help jog his memory. It isn't until college that Treborn realizes reading his journals will allow him to travel through time and change the past. One fumble after another follows as Treborn manages to muddle his life even more by changing the wrong parts of his past, leading to depressing futures for him and his friends.

Audiences looking for Kutcher-esque high jinks within "The Butterfly Effect" will instead find situations and ideas that will leave them squirming in their seats. The movie tackles everything from extreme violence among children to prison rape. Kutcher tumbles from one awkward state of affairs to another, as he finds himself in parallel realities that have been created by tampering with time's fabric.

The movie contains an outstanding supporting cast that helps in casting a credible actor out of Kutcher. Flashbacks comprise a good portion of the film, and the presence of talented child actors is definitely a plus.

Logan Lerman (7-year-old Treborn) plays off his surroundings with a cool, collected composure, while Jesse James (13-year-old Jimmy) bursts with so much repressed anger and hatred that he transcends his short stature to become one of the creepiest children to hit cinemas in a long time. Elden Henson (Lenny), besides bearing a striking resemblance to talented actor Philip Seymour Hoffman, is developing his acting capacity in great strides with each movie he appears in. Amy Smart and William Lee Scott also turn in commendable performances as Treborn's doomed lover and her brother. Amy Smart's ability to play such different versions of the same character is commendable, to say the least.

Often pushing the boundaries of taste, the movie's main fault ironically lies in that the only thing that would have made it better is if it had actually pushed harder. The movie flies in the face of excellence, but just manages to skim the surface with its dedication to a tried and true narrative structure. Without giving away the ending, one can safely say that, if the directors had just tacked on an extra 10 seconds to the final shot, the movie could have become a classic movie like "Planet of the Apes" is today.

While not for the weak-hearted or closed-minded, "The Butterfly Effect" deserves a viewing or two from audiences that are willing to take a chance on an actor who is more famous for his off-screen antics than his acting. If those viewers do take a chance, it's highly probable they'll enjoy what they see.

- Robert Saucedo



"Broken Lizard's Club Dread"
Fox Searchlight Pictures
Starring Bill Paxton and Jimmy Chandrashekar

It's hard to watch Broken Lizard's new movie "Club Dread" without comparing it to the comedy troupe's previous offering, "Super Troopers." Both movies feature the talented group of comedians in a respective sub-genre of mock-comedy that is often overused in today's Hollywood.

In "Club Dread," Bill Paxton plays aging rock star Coconut Pete, who is known for his not-quite-a-hit song "Pinacoladaburg" which was obscured by a similarly named song from a different artist. When Pete opens an island resort, it becomes the site of several grisly murders.

Beginning with what has now become a staple for horror movies, three attractive camp counselors are brutally murdered while engaging in promiscuous sex instead of doing their jobs. From that point on, the movie quickly introduces the comedy troupe's cast of characters that help partially save the movie from mediocrity: Jay Chandrasekar dons an unruly mop of dreadlocked hair to portray Putman, the island's tennis instructor; Steve Lemme utilizes a bad Latin accent to portray Juan, the diving instructor; Paul Soter is Dave, the island DJ/drug dealer; and Erik Stolhanske plays Sam, local officer of the fun police.

By itself, "Club Dread" is an above-average comedy that features some really funny scenes. Bill Paxton is hilarious as the aged rock star who's more interested in the carnal pleasures than actually running his resort. Some of the death scenes are laugh-out-loud funny, especially Putman's last-ditch effort to stop the killer with a volley of tennis balls. Ultimately, not one scene lives up to the standard set by

tennis balls. Ultimately, not one scene lives up to the standard set by "Super Troopers."

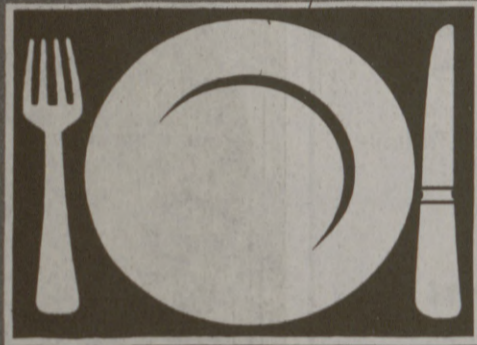
"Club Dread" is a semi-coherent murder mystery that has comedy sprinkled in for good measure. The actual mystery is somewhat haphazard and sloppy, but the comedy that orbits it helps to distract from the shallow plot. Not quite a horror movie, the film will have audience members shrieking and laughing within seconds. While watching the movie, audiences will enjoy themselves and won't feel the minutes slowly churning as in some other comedies, but at the same time, when audiences leave the theater, there won't be the feel-

ing of greatness that marks classic films of this genre.

Perhaps in time, when the Broken Lizard troupe has a few more movies under their belt and the actors are freed from the characters that helped make them, "Club Dread" will be remembered more fondly. But for now, don't expect the movie to make waves.



- Robert Saucedo



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