

Addams Family more than just a macabre experience

by Ira Nayman

Charles Addams' *New Yorker* cartoons must have been quite scandalous when they were first published in the 1940s and 50s. To be sure, World War II had horrors enough of its own, but Addams brought the macabre to the staid, stable suburbs of America. If Addams' cartoons were merely gruesome, there would be no sense in reviving them for the 1990s. *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th* and other horror films have given audiences more chills than Addams' relatively domesticated, sophisticated panels; comedy has been combined with horror in films like *A Nightmare on Elm*

film
The Addams Family
 directed by Barry Sonnenfeld
 starring Anjelica Huston and Raul Julia
 produced by Paramount Pictures

Street and Beetlejuice. Addams used his family — Morticia, Gomez, the children, Wednesday and Pugsley, Uncle Fester and Lurch, the butler — to satirize the conventions of the emerging middle class. From home movies to summer camp to declarations of love, Addams viciously, relentlessly skewered American customs. Unlike *The Addams Family* television show, which tended towards

the camp humour prevalent in the 60s, *The Addams Family* movie is as wickedly satirical as Addams' original cartoons; in fact, many of the jokes and situations in the film are taken directly from them. While the results are not as frenetic or original as some recent films (Tim Burton's *Beetlejuice* and *Edward Scissorhands*, in particular), they are charming and thoughtful.

The plot is simplicity in itself: an impostor poses as Fester, Gomez' long lost brother, in order to cheat the Addams out of their wealth. The story isn't especially convincing, but also isn't that important — it is just an excuse for a series of macabre jokes

and situations.

A girl scout walks up to Pugsley and Wednesday, who are selling lemonade (laced with a dozen different poisons). She offers to buy a cup of lemonade if they agree to buy a box of cookies, but she's fussy about what she'll drink. "Is your lemonade made with real lemons?" she asks.

"Are your girl scout cookies made with real girl scouts?" Wednesday responds.

In a different scene, Morticia, temporarily forced to become a substitute teacher, brings a class of seven-year-olds to tears by telling them the story of Hansel and Gretel, but making them sympathize with the witch who gets burned alive. It is a funny moment, but it has a point: we tell children such gruesome fairy tales without really considering what we're saying.

The casting is impeccable and the acting inspired. The family ensemble, which includes Christopher Lloyd, Christina Ricci, Jimmy Workman, Judith Malina and Carel Struycken, manage to inject pathos into their

gallows humour, something which rarely happened in the TV series.

Anjelica Huston as Morticia and Raul Julia as Gomez are both hilarious and touching; though given a gruesome twist, their love is more affecting than many so-called screen romances. In fact, *The Addams Family*, in its own bizarre way, supports an old-fashioned family ideal in its depictions of various loving relationships, such as sibling rivalries or parents' love of their children.

A few bars from the television theme song are thrown in at the beginning of the film and quickly forgotten, an early indication that the film doesn't take much from the series. On the other hand, the score, mostly Hollywood Full Orchestra Generic, with a truly awful rap by (former MC) Hammer, isn't a good substitute.

This minor sour note aside, *The Addams Family* is a very entertaining film. It may not move as quickly as other films in its genre, but it has more depth.

What are your children watching?

by Anthony Pizzari

It's a pathetic story. A Jewish immigrant family of mice gets conned to moving to the West from New York on the promise of a better life. This promise is made by cats whose hidden agenda is to make "mouse-burgers" out of them after exploiting their labour. No one knows about this except Feivel, who must convince everyone that the cats want to eat them.

When Disney does a fairytale, they say, it's forever. Let's hope not, be-

film
An American Tail: Feivel Goes West
 directed by Phil Nibelink and Simon Wells
 featuring the voice of Jimmy Stewart
 produced by Disney/Amblin Entertainment

cause this cartoon is evil. Going to see this animated film raises the serious issue of what kind of ideologies today's children are being fed at the movies.

What's not important about this film are its technical aspects. Disney has been making cartoons for decades now; they know how to entertain. But

Feivel Goes West goes beyond entertainment — it fosters terrible stereotypes.

Indians, for example, are portrayed as superstitious, "pagan," violent and ignorant when they make the cat their god and lavish him with riches.

Women are portrayed as weak, dependent and dominated by men. Feivel's sister just wants to sing; she is dependent upon her father and brother to "save her life." Feivel's mother is only an extension of her husband, the "head" of the family.

And it is the old dog, with his old-fashioned way of doing things, that saves all the little mice from the sinister cats. The real twist is that the dog trains Tiger (that goofy but lovable anti-hero of a cat) to be a dog.

The dialogue is made up of clichés, proverbs, quotes from old movies and a huge dose of pro-American values. The intertextual relations are too overwhelming and depressing to consider. It's no wonder society has so many problems when tomorrow's adults are being conditioned to think of Indians as primitive, women as physically (and intellectually) inferior and old-fashioned values as good.

An American Tail: Feivel Goes West is the kind of film you're supposed to go and see with your eight year-old cousin. Just say no.



Three mean hombres walk towards the camera. Is this an indication of what we can expect from the New World Order, or just the latest Disney cartoon, *An American Tail: Feivel Goes West*?



"Are you unhappy, darling?"
 "Oh, yes, yes! Completely."

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