

Liebestraum is too long and convoluted — it's no Fellini

by Anthony Pizzari

Liebestraum is a story about an architectural writer (Kevin Anderson) who



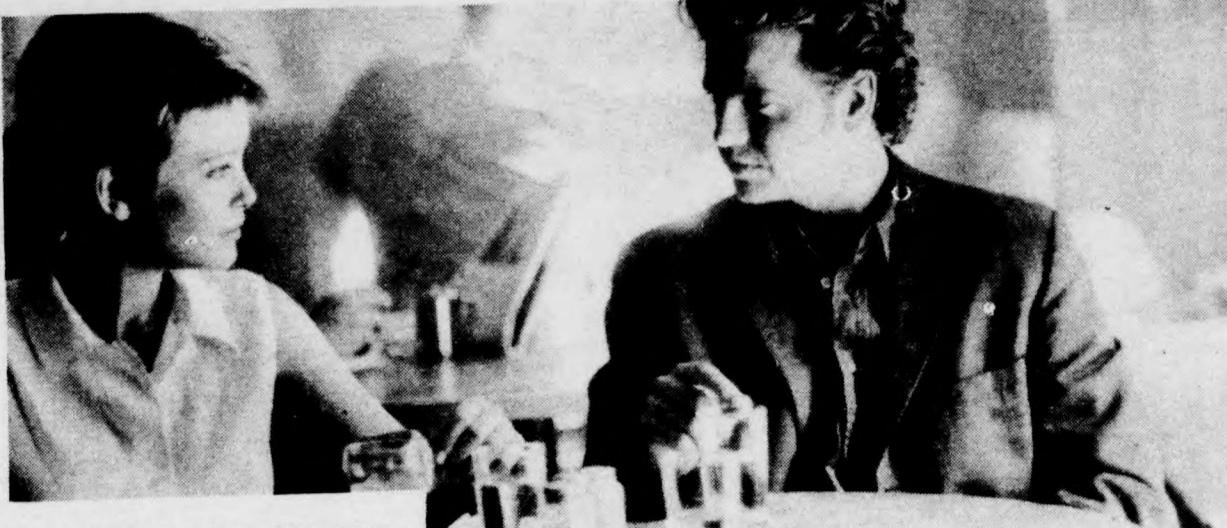
Mike Figgis, director of the new film *Liebestraum*.

film

Liebestraum
written and directed by Mike Figgis
starring Kevin Anderson and Kim Novak
produced by Eric Fellner

goes back to his small hometown to visit his dying mother (Kim Novak). There, he meets up with an old college buddy (Bill Pullman) who is destroying a cast iron building. Anderson eventually falls in love with his friend's wife (played by Pamela Gidley).

The characters are connected by the cast iron building — an old department store — and the events that transpired there 40 years earlier. It's a complicated plot, but the motivating emotions for all the characters are simple: lust and revenge. Unfortunately,



Pamela Gidley and Kevin Anderson star in Mike Figgis' *Liebestraum*. The film plays at symbolism, but doesn't allow the symbolism enough ambiguity to be interesting.

nately, the film delivers little of the exploration it promises.

No doubt director Mike Figgis is using metaphors to look at the dark

side of the human animal. We can sense the Bergmanesque themes of life, love and death. But where Bergman leaves much to the imagination, Figgis tries to say everything. The result is a film that leaves the audience nothing to discuss after it's over. The situation takes some interesting turns, but the narrative is so clearly set forth that everyone knows what will happen halfway through the film.

Liebestraum is too convoluted, and, at 112 minutes, far too long. Since we know the characters half an hour into the film, later scenes become redundant. Figgis may have been trying too hard to make a good film. He fills the story with characters that serve a metaphorical purpose, then disappear.

Dreams play an important part in the characterizations in the film, but their meaning is lost in their presentation and placement. We know they are supposed to be symbolic, but it's still difficult to connect them to the story's main character.

But don't let me mislead you. This is not Fellini, or the poetry at the start

of Bergman's *Persona*. Instead, the dreams are more commercialized, like in *The Wall* (if you can imagine that!). They feel gratuitous. Rather than use the ambiguity of the dreams to work for the story, Figgis attaches a specific meaning to them that is not clear or insightful.

Kevin Anderson's presence becomes irritating. His chubby face and Corey Hart expressions make you lose all sympathy for him. In her hospital scenes, Kim Novak is directed like she is in a Bergman film; unfortunately, this film's context doesn't allow for it. Rather than probing the mother's character, the film turns Novak's performance into a piece of melodrama.

Liebestraum does have high production values. The sets are beautifully designed and the lighting has a mystical quality. Some scenes are over-stylized, but, on the whole, the design effectively creates the intended mood. The film was shot by Juan Anchira, who also shot *House of Games* for David Mamet.

So go see *Liebestraum*, just don't listen to it.

Van Sant's surreal search for home

by Garine Torossian

Director Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho* confronts the theme of searching for home and needing to find one's place in the world. Van Sant presents this theme in the most surreal way, with fantasy sequences, closeups, symbolic images, endless roads, tableau-like sex scenes, Shakespearean language and theatrical settings.

Winner of prizes at the Venice, Toronto and New York Film Festivals, the film begins on an infinite

film

My Own Private Idaho
directed by Gus Van Sant
starring Keanu Reeves and River Phoenix
produced by New Line Cinema

road in Idaho. It is an image to which we will return again and again. Mike (River Phoenix) stands there, then lies there, a victim of narcolepsy dreaming of his long lost mother.

My Own Private Idaho is about Mike's search for her, aided by his best friend Scott (Keanu Reeves), the son of the mayor of Portland. They

get by as male prostitutes. Bob (William Richert) plays father figure to Mike and Scott; he is also a Falstaffian character, paraphrasing from Shakespeare's *Henry IV* as his pupils listen, amused.

My Own Private Idaho consistently marks Van Sant's formal and stylistic freedom. Its surreal style highlights the eccentric way the controversial characters see things. Reeves and Phoenix are exceptional as young men whose lives are confounded and enriched by a colourful group of companions, customers and lost relatives, until their individual goals threaten to separate them.

Van Sant's imagination goes wild in *My Own Private Idaho*, a more visually daring film than his earlier *Drugstore Cowboy*. It confronts important issues, representing them in a most creative way. By the end, one is overwhelmed and inspired by its originality.



Scott (Keanu Reeves) and Mike (River Phoenix) take to the road in Gus Van Sant's latest film, *My Own Private Idaho*. By confronting important issues and representing them in a creative way, the film is overwhelming and inspiring.

Jane Campion's latest contains lyricism and visual poetry

by Pedram Fouladiampour

Lyricism and visual poetry seem to be important tools used by emerging young directors for conveying ideas and telling stories. Recently we witnessed Emir Kusturica's lyrical depiction of human fate in *Time of the Gypsies* and watched Zhang Yimou paint the screen with exotic colours in *Ju Dou*.

Jane Campion (*Sweetie*) is no exception. *An Angel at My Table* demonstrates Campion's fluency with cinematic language.

The film portrays the life of New Zealand novelist Janet Frame. Author of 11 novels, four collections of short stories and a volume of poetry, Frame was born to a poor, but intellectual family. As a young woman, she was confined to a mental hospital, suspected of schizophrenia. It was there she started writing. With recognition of her first book, Frame was released from the hospital.

Campion, a native of New Zealand who was trained at the Australian Film and Television School, claims *Angel* is a "kinder, more humanist piece." The film is divided into three

film

An Angel at My Table
directed by Jane Campion
starring Kerry Fox

episodes, each covering a specific period in Frame's life; each episode consists of smaller episodes and anecdotes.

Campion's claim of humanism is supported by the characters she portrays. From the start, young Janet enlists the affection of the audience, which will last throughout the film. Through meticulous delineation of her appearance and actions, a vision of young Janet is initiated in the audience's mind that contrasts with the hospitalized Janet.

Angel is a tale of an individual's creative maturity and how this process is accepted by those around her. Throughout her intellectual odyssey, Janet is an active observer whose interaction with the individuals around her is a progressive element of the story.

These well established bonds between human beings hold the episodic structure of *An Angel at My Table* firmly together.

THE WINTER COMMISSION ON THE ATKINSON COLLEGE STUDENT ASSOCIATION

The Winter Commission invites Atkinson students and interested members of the York Community to submit your views on how the Atkinson College Student Association can better fulfill its mandate.

The Winter Commission was called by the Master, Atkinson College, at the request of the Atkinson College Student Association (ACSA). Its purpose is to make recommendations on how ACSA can represent and promote the interests of Atkinson Students more effectively.

Among the issues that the Commission is investigating are:

- Identifying the needs and interests of Atkinson Students
- Improving communication between ACSA and the Atkinson/York Community
- ACSA's mandate and objectives
- ACSA's constitution and organizational structure.

The Commission welcomes your views, concerns, and suggestions.

Please forward written submissions c/o Maureen Brackley, Office of the Master, 120 Atkinson College