

Arts & Entertainment

Accidental Tourist a satisfying film with first rate acting

The Accidental Tourist ★★★ ½
Famous Players Capitol Square

review by Cheryl Onciul

Director Lawrence Kasdan presents North American audiences with a refreshingly interesting plot and set of characters in his latest box office success, *The Accidental Tourist*. This film, featuring William Hurt, Geena Davis, and Kathleen Turner, is this season's most impressive romantic comedy-drama.

The story focuses on the adventures of Macon Leary (Hurt), a travel guide writer whose methodical domestic life is disrupted when his wife Sarah (Turner) leaves him and he meets a bizarre dog trainer named Muriel (Davis). We follow Macon on his business trips to Europe and Canada, and

Edmonton: "It's so dry here that the rain dries up before it hits the ground."

discover that his primary objective in writing his travel guides is to help the "accidental" traveller to minimize the trauma of leaving home.

The logo of his books is an armchair, accurately characterizing the advice given in the guides, which is to avoid anything foreign. The books list vital information for the reluctant tourist, such as where one might purchase a "Whopper-with-cheese" in virtually any European city. Macon's powers of observation are very keen, as he proves with his remark when visiting Edmonton: "It's so dry here that the rain dries up before it hits the ground!" (A comment which all Albertans — except maybe those in the flooded regions of north-east Edmonton — can really relate to!)

After breaking his leg, Macon, in order to recuperate, chooses to move in with his sister and two brothers, played by Amy Wright, David Ogden Stiers, and Ed

Begley, Jr. The Leary family proves to be one of the most amusing elements of the story, with their eccentric habits like ignoring ringing telephones and alphabetizing the contents of their kitchen cupboards. When Macon finds it necessary to enlist Muriel's services in order to discipline his incorrigible Welsh corgi, Edward (Bud), his ultra-conservative family is appalled.

Although somewhat reluctantly, Macon becomes romantically involved with Muriel, and emotionally involved with her seven year old son Alexander (Robert Gorman). Predictably, just as Macon is becoming comfortable in his new arrangement with Muriel, his almost-ex-wife Sarah decides that she wants to give their marriage a second chance. It is then for Macon to decide whether to fall back on his old routine of avoiding the unexpected, or to become fully engaged in life's adventure, wherever it may lead him.

The acting in *The Accidental Tourist* is first rate. William Hurt is touching as the finicky Macon Leary. Hurt gives plausibility to the change which Macon undergoes, from the father and husband who repressed all his feelings, to the lover who is ready to experience life and express emotion. Geena Davis adds much to this film with her portrayal of the odd dog trainer, Muriel. Muriel is an assertive woman who knows what she wants and gets it, but who has a sensitive side which is obvious in her love for both Alexander and Macon. Kathleen Turner definitely has the weakest of the three leading roles. Turner is convincing as Sarah, the dominating wife, but the movie does little to explore the depths of her character. The supporting cast is also very strong, featuring entertaining performances by Wright, Stiers, and Begley, Jr. as the droll Leary family.

Overall, *The Accidental Tourist* is a very satisfying film. Kasdan combines wonderfully understated wit with an intricate plot and poignantly real characters. This film is Kasdan's best production since *The Big Chill*, which was the starting point of his successful career as a director who explores real-life relationships and issues which shape and guide the lives of modern people.



Left to right: Kathleen Turner, William Hurt and Geena Davis turn in strong performances in *The Accidental Tourist*.

Talk Radio better as a play

Talk Radio ★★★ ½
Cineplex Eaton Centre

review by Dragos Ruiu

Talk Radio, the new movie from scriptwriter turned director Oliver Stone, should have remained a play so that Liz Nichols could hate it. It just isn't made for a movie.

Oh, it's a compelling and involving story all right. But a movie audience can only watch a few scenes with the camera whirling about Eric Bogosian's face in a macroscopic close-up before they get the urge to throw up.

Talk Radio is a monologue. It has only one main character and some voices. The story is loosely based on the assassination of Dallas D.J. Alan Berg by incensed, pea-brained (is there any other kind?) neo-Nazis.

The lead character is an obnoxious (?) combination of Howard Stern, Morton Downey Jr., and Alan Berg named Robert

Champlain. He spends most of his time insulting the idiotic racist callers to his sensationalistic radio show. When he isn't doing that, he is busy being a jerk to everyone around him. He is well hated, and the audience isn't given much reason to like him either. You feel sorry for him, but you don't despise him.

The movie unfolds with a morbid certainty. Champlain starts to be very serious about his show, inciting racist elements of his audience despite death threats. He forsakes his personal relationships for "the show." The events build to the conclusion with a mounting pessimism. The suspense for the audience rides on curiosity. Can Champlain escape his doomed roller-coaster life?

And this play works, almost. Oliver Stone uses lighting to set the mood and convey the feelings of the characters effectively. It's a technique that went over well in *Wall Street* and he makes extensive use of it. The few characters are well acted, and the dialogue is great. Watching, you start to be wrapped up in the growing turmoil of Champlain's life.

The problem is that the interesting lines belong to Champlain (Bogosian) and the voices on the phone. It's one big long soliloquy by Eric Bogosian, who co-wrote the screenplay, and scripted the play as well as starred in the movie.

To make the static happenings seem lively, Stone tries everything. He has Bogosian stand up, wear a headset and make gestures while doing the show, all of which just looks silly. He has the camera whirl around Bogosian faster and faster as the confusion grows, which makes the viewer dizzy. He puts microscopic lenses on the camera and focuses on every drop of spittle that leaves Bogosian's mouth, which quickly becomes disgusting for everyone except any dermatologists who might happen to be watching.

Stone also tries to liven things up by using flashbacks and setting some of the scenes in Champlain's home. The flashbacks are well done, and great attention is paid to details like muting the colors of the flashback sequence. It's good, but it's too little. The bottom line is that they really only had one set for the entire movie. They scrimped, it is static, and it bores the audience.

The film was shot on a rushed schedule (in between two other movies for Stone) and they didn't bother making it much more than a play shot on film. It's a good play, but not what you want from a movie.



Left to right: Eric Bogosian, Ellen Greene, director Oliver Stone, and Alec Baldwin from the film version of *Talk Radio*.