

How wonderful is Wonder Boys?

BY MARK EVANS

Normally I try not to review anything that's been in the theatre for more than a week since movies usually stay in town for a short period of time as is. However, as far as I can tell very few people have gone to see *Wonder Boys*, which is a shame. So while the film may not be long in this city, I'd advise you

to check it out while you have the chance.

Why is this movie so good? Well, there are a lot of reasons. It's nice to finally see a comedy that's actually funny without being either crude or dependent on gross-out humor. Sure we need our *South Parks* and *Austin Powers*, but having something a bit smarter to balance that out is a welcome change.

That said, *Wonder Boys* isn't

solely dependent on its laughs for its entertainment value. There are a number of good stories at the heart of this movie, and they're all worth telling. The central character is a college English professor named Grady Tripp (Michael Douglas), an author whose first book, *The Arsonist's Daughter*, is a critically acclaimed bestseller.

Unfortunately for Grady, that was going on seven years ago and he hasn't written a book since. His follow-up is the victim of reverse writer's block — he has no idea how to end it. Boggled down with a book that's clocking in at just over 2600 pages and an editor desperately looking for the book to bolster his downward spiral of a career, Grady's life is getting out of control.

Enter further complications: Grady has been sleeping with the Dean's wife and she's now pregnant with his child. One of his students, Hannah (Katie Holmes), keeps try-

ing to get him to sleep with her, and another one of his students, James (Tobey Maguire), just might be a better writer than Grady is right now. Throw in a dead dog, a stolen car, lots of drugs, and celebrity memorabilia and you've got a film that makes two hours pass like 20 minutes.

The key to this film is Grady's relationship with James and how the two of them both learn about and inspire one another. Grady recognizes James' talent right away and tries to help nurture it into a real career, while James helps his teacher sort out both his artistic and real-life problems. There's a real dynamic between the two, and they make a great team during the course of the movie.

Acting here is excellent across the board; everybody fits well into their roles, although Katie Holmes' character really should have been given more to do. Robert Downey Jr. plays Grady's editor

Crabtree to very good effect, and Richard Knox has the funniest two scenes in the movie playing a very disgruntled car owner. I don't really like Michael Douglas all that much, but he's just great here as a man who has precious little control over any part of his life.

Drug use is handled very well in this movie, I don't think I've seen a film that handled it better. Rather than glorifying it or condemning it, it's just an accepted part of things. Grady smokes pot in at least half his scenes, and although he does get mildly rebuked once nothing ever happens to him because he uses it. Drugs exist, people use them, end of story. Nice change.

Bottom line: *Wonder Boys* is both charming and hilarious. A welcome change from the crap clogging up the theatre's right now. There are a lot of good laughs and they're bound together by a story with real heart. A great movie, no question. Three and a half stars out of four.

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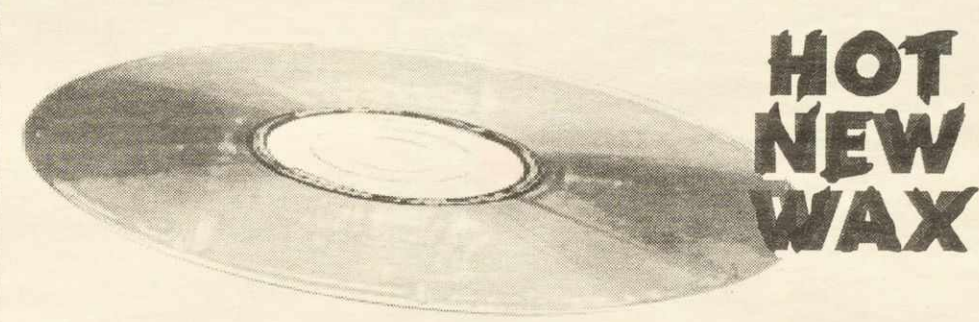
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Cure — Bloodflowers
(Elektra/AOL)
The third release of the trilogy (*Pornography*, *Disintegration*), *Bloodflowers* fits snugly aside *Disintegration* but the music sounds a bit more modern, which makes sense since the prior was released when I was in grade 4, slightly around the time of **Milli Vanilli** and **Terrence Trent D'Arby's** *Wishing Well*. I heard a whispering that this will be last **Cure** studio record, which might explain the all-out epic tracks, "Watching Me Fall" is over 11 minutes, although probably not. I'd say this puppy is must have **Cure**, indeed. — Jon.

Kid Koala — Carpal Tunnel Syndrome
(Ninja Tune)
Montreal turntablist's first major release is a gem that should be part of every hip hop enthusiasts record collection. The Kid pushes the limits of what can be created with turntables, and does it honestly. The samples on this record will make you giggle and quip 'yeeeah' a la Flava Flav, with "Like Irregular Chickens" and "Barhopper 1&2" at the top o' the list. A serious piece of wax, with a dope comic to boot. — Ox.

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