

Square Dance needs jazz

Square Dance
Princess Theatre
February 12 - 15

review by Jaié Laplante

Square Dance has about as much to do with square dancing as the current, super-ratty thriller *Splandance* has to do with slamdancing: both serve as over-ambitious metaphors for over-ambitious films.

But at least you can't fault *Square Dance* for being rapid and pretentious, like *Splandance*. It is there is thought here. There is perception and depth. Above all, there is honest emotion.

What there isn't, unfortunately, is enough dramatic tension in this simple, painfully straightforward tale to sustain our interest all the way through its 110 minute length.

The film takes us through familiar territory: 13-year-old Gemma (Winona Ryder) lives on her grandfather's Texas farm, where the big events of the week are making sure the chickens get watered and going to church for prayer meetings. She's just as content as the cows she shares the scenery with; that is, until her hell-cat hedonist mother (Jane Alexander) roars up in her cheap pumps and a painted face to offer the tomboyish Gemma her big ticket out of the backwoods.

Gemma at first refuses; all she knows of mamma is that she dumped her off as a child in the dusty life of rural America to go make money, drink plenty and meet men for both fun and profit.

But exhausted of the bickering and general crabbiness of grand-pop (played by Jason Robards, who demonstrates what REAL one-dimensional over-acting is all about), Gemma packs her bags and heads south, thus kicking in the familiar coming-of-age/adolescent awakening storyline.

Troubled by the budding young woman inside her child's body, the microcosmic weeks ahead of *Our Sensitive Young Heroine* are bound to be full of turmoil. Disillusionment and despair, the difficulty of finding an

identity when one's roots are constantly being uprooted, thrown around, and rendered meaningless in the face of the cynicism and restlessness of the age — *Square Dance* doesn't disappoint us by not biting off enough to chew. It tries hard — maybe too hard.

After all, we've already been tipped on the outcome by the aforementioned metaphorical title. *Square dancers* start and end up in the same spot, "home". (Get it? Get it?)

If there is anything to recommend this film, it is the two leads. The always-intelligent Jane Alexander, who also served as executive producer, is in peak form as the no-nonsense, often bitter woman who "has never fit in anywhere", but who isn't "about to let it stand in her way." As her equally strong-willed, intelligent daughter, Winona Ryder is also excellent — she captures the odd combination of gawkiness and grace of her age with few false steps.

Robards, as mentioned, shamelessly goes through the motions, but Rob Lowe turns in a surprisingly credible performance as a retarded young man for whom Gemma feels her first pangs of love, both motherly and sexual. He may sound, at times, like a 45 RPM on 33 speed, but give him full points for attempt — he's put intelligence into his work. Like the film, he tries hard, and his intentions are good.

There is nothing really wrong with *Square Dance*, besides the fact that most of the supporting characters are underwritten to the point of caricature. But the style of first-time director Daniel Petrie (who wrote the original *Beverly Hills Cop*) is perhaps too honest and gentle: you see him out there, straining for that real-good, down-home earnestness. The film suffers in comparison to the far superior *Desert Bloom* (1986), with Ion Voigt and Jobeth Williams, and last year's *Wish You Were Here* (from Britain), both of which dealt with the same subject material, much more successfully.

Square Dance is a nice attempt, but that's probably the biggest part of its problem: this movie almost gags on its own perpetual niceness.



"Hmm... which one of us four wrote that song?"

Music Trivia Contest

Grant & Lloyd reincarnated

by G. Winton and L. Robertson

Throughout the history of popular music, and even before, people have been dying. In fact, there are more dead rock stars than there are live ones! Therefore, this week's column will be a tribute to great musicians gone by (and some not so great ones as well).

Remember Mike Spindloe's column on dead rockers last year? Well, seeing as how we have copied nearly everything else that Mike has done we might as well go all the way. Hope you enjoy this week's questions.

Congratulations to **L. Newby** who correctly answered everything except the Booker T. Boffin question. L can pick up his/her prize, a gift certificate from SU Records, from Elaine at the Gateway office — Room 282 SUB. Special mention goes out to this week's worst entries from Allan Poulson and Jason Haight (not their real names). Sorry guys, no booty prize.

Here are last week's answers:

1. Dr. Winston O'Boogie was John Lennon
2. Christopher is Prince
3. Booker T. Boffin records under the name Thomas Dolby
4. Gordon Sumner is Sting
5. Duran Duran is a character from the film *Barbarella*
6. Paul Hewson picked the name Bono Vox, which means "good voice". (The name Bono rhymes with the capital of West Germany, not with Sonny and Cher.)
7. Buddy Holly was Charles Hardin Holley. The Big Bopper was J.P. Richardson
8. Elvis Presley's middle name was Aaron
9. Dave Evans is the Edge

10. Harry Webb is Cliff Richard

Tie Breaker: David Bowie was born David Jones. He changed his name (after his first record) to prevent confusion with Davey Jones of the Monkees.

Now, this week's morbid questions:

1. Which member of the Beach Boys drowned off the coast of southern California in late December, 1983?
2. How did Duane Allman die? How old was he?
3. What New York apartment building was John Lennon outside when he was shot?
4. Who died reading "The Scientific Search for Jesus" (a book on the Shroud of Turin), in his bathroom?
5. In which U.S. city were eleven people crushed to death before a Who concert?
6. Cass Elliot (The Mamas and Papas) died in the very same hotel room as another very famous rocker. Who?
7. Who murdered Marvin Gaye?
8. When Sid Vicious committed suicide, he was about to stand trial for the murder of whom?
9. How did Jim Croce die?
10. In what city did Jim Morrison supposedly die?

And now, not one, but two morbid, death-related tie-breakers.

TB1. In what Beatles song does John say "I bury Paul" (or was it "Canberry Sauce")?

TB2. Who, or what, are the "Deadheads"?

Drop off entries in Room 282 SUB before 10 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 17th.

Good Luck!

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