

Swingers created this mess

Pop culture hit film sparked an attitude shift

BY VANESSA OWEN

Whether you jive or not, swing is in. And on Saturday night, the Oxford Cinema presented a midnight showing of the film that revived it all, *Swingers*.

The movie, starring Jon Favreau (*Rudy*, *Chicago Hope*) and Vince Vaughn (*Return to Paradise*, *Psycho*), has coined such phrases as "beautiful babies" (beautiful women) and "you so money" (you are cool). These expressions are now part of a lingo and attitude that is affecting young twentysomethings worldwide. With the revival of swing music and swing mentality, (fast times and faster women), *Swingers* is quickly becoming a cult film as it is the paragon of the genre it created.

The film details the life of Mike Peters (Favreau), a recently-dumped, heartbroken New Yorker who has moved to sunny L.A. He is having enormous trouble forgetting his ex-girlfriend and

moving on with his life. In his quest for elusive Hollywood stardom, the out-of-work comedian/actor, with a little help from his friends, discovers that there are other "beautiful babies" out there and they are pure "money."

Directed by Doug Liman on a budget of only \$250,000, the movie grossed over \$4.5 million domestically.

Although Liman pays homage to the Scorsese-Tarantino school of cinema, he has his own wonderful ideas about light and timing. He is able to entice and amuse the audience with good direction and acting rather than costly special effects. He brilliantly captured Mike's overwhelming misery in a poignant scene where Mike, after being rejected by Nikki (Brooke Langton of *Melrose Place*), is dismally sorting through old photographs and letters from his ex-girlfriend Michelle. Anyone who has been kicked to the curb knows the feelings well and can completely relate.

Another hilarious scene has Trent (Vince Vaughn), Sue (Patrick Vanhorn) and Mike all playing Sega hockey. When a pizza guy comes to the door and Mike pays him, Sue and Trent start screaming out questions like, "Is he clean? Does he have a cute tushie? Come back to bed, Mikey." Poor Mike is stuck pretending to ignore the comments as the pizza guy gives him his change and several amused looks.

Scenes like that show that *Swingers* has a great cast. The chemistry between the young actors allowed them to portray their characters in a realistic and amusing way. The audience is able to identify with every character and is therefore able to empathize with Mike. His friends' humorous attempts to act ultra-cool while trying to cheer him up keep the

audience laughing.

The movie's soundtrack, true to its name, features swing artists such as Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, who recently "jived" their way onto the mainstream music scene. With hits like "You and Me and the Bottle Makes Three" they add a foot tapping, hip grinding feel to the movie.

But the cultural aspect of the movie is where its real power lies.

Swingers may change the way many guys behave when it comes to women. Instead of "talking puppy dogs and ice-cream," Trent says, "be honest. Women are not stupid. They are good at reading the vibe and are in tune with what's really going down. They know what's happening. Don't manipulate, deny and condescend. It's insulting."

The popularity of the movie has led to Jon Favreau and Vince Vaughn publishing *The Swinger Rules*, a humorous collection of 15 rules every guy should be armed with when entering the dating scene.

For example, rule 12 states, "Don't hide the fact that you like sex. That doesn't mean act like the fourteen year old on the back of the bus who's constantly pulling on himself and making obscene noises. It just means own your sexuality and don't apologize for it."

As with any popular film, *Swingers* does not come without criticism. Some women have described the characters as nothing but a bunch of jerks. Others accuse the movie of being sexist and portraying women in a submissive light.

"Women are not objects to be captured by men and then thrown away. We don't need to be beautiful in order to be considered attractive and desirable. *Swingers* gives guys permission to use us and move on,"



says Jan White, a student at Mount Saint Vincent University.

Not so, says Jon Favreau, who penned the script.

"All the women in the script are very powerful... the women are much stronger than the men. I think that if anything, women enjoy the insight into the way males are when females are not around."

Strong or not, if the following 'insight' is any indication, women probably would have preferred to remain ignorant. This dialogue occurs in the film after Trent hits on a waitress by giving her a 50 cent tip:

Trent: Baby, that was money! Tell me that wasn't money.

Mike: That was demeaning.
Trent: She smiled, baby.
Mike: I can't believe what an asshole you are.
Trent: No, no, baby. She smiled. This is what we came here for. No, we met a beautiful baby and she likes you.
Mike: She likes you.
Trent: Whatever, daddy's gonna get her to bring a friend. And I, and I don't care which one I end up with, her or one of her beautiful baby friends.
In the end, *Swingers* is an amusing tale of the lives and hardships of a few fictional guys trying to be cool in the competitive world of Hollywood.

THE ATTIC

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