

Short lives up to expectations in movie about dating in the eighties

By NORMAN WILNER

David has just lost his job, but Kathy thinks they're going out to celebrate his big promotion. Kathy has a seven-year-old daughter, and she's a heavy smoker, but David doesn't know that. Such is the way of daters in Arman Bernstein's *Cross My Heart*, now playing at Cineplex-Odeon theatres across the city.

Expectations were high for this film, depicting in real-time the crucial third date of David (Martin Short) and Kathy (Annette O'Toole). And the film doesn't let you down for a minute.

David is a sunglasses salesman who has been bounced from his \$30,000-a-year job. Kathy thinks he's been promoted to regional sales manager because that's what he told her. Trusting each other is something daters must depend on. Of course, David believes all this is excusable because he really might be falling in love with her. He doesn't know it, but she's just used the same rationale to explain away her web of lies with her best friend.

The film sets up the dating/lying question very nicely, with the views of both parties juxtaposed against the opening credits as they prepare for their evening out. And when the two of them end up in bed together, it's another lie: David has borrowed his best friend's apartment—and his car—to impress Kathy, feeling that his broken-down car and shabbily-decorated apartment aren't good

enough for her. Kathy's illusion is somewhat more innocent, having to do with her shoulders, but it works just as well . . . until events conspire to reveal the truth. And it's something that might destroy the budding relationship before it succeeds.

But this is a Hollywood romance, and so love will probably conquer all. The fun of *Cross My Heart* is finding out how events will proceed to their inevitable conclusion. Yes, David and Kathy do get into bed—the film's ad campaign seems to tell us this with unrestrained glee: "a comedy you can still respect in the morning," and all that—but events proceed from there with a minimum of soft-focus shots and no fade-outs at all. The sex of *Cross My Heart* is '80s sex, straightforward and responsible. Before bedding down, David asks Kathy if she has herpes; she counters by asking him about the "other disease."

The film has been criticized for not coming right out and saying the word, but why would two people getting to know each other bluntly ask: "Do you have AIDS?" Of course the question would be discreetly posed and fleetingly answered; no one would come right out and say "Sex with me could kill you" in the real world, either. (Both David and Kathy do, however, carry condoms.)

But despite the extended bedroom scene, *Cross My Heart* doesn't come across as raunchy or indulgent. The performances of Short and O'Toole are nothing short of perfect for their

characters, with Short making a quantum leap from his frenzied hypochondriac Jack Putter of *Innerspace* (who was also a wonderful character) and O'Toole proving herself a versatile actress capable of more than just window-dressing roles (*Superman III*, *Cat People*, *48 Hrs.*). In fact, she is downright appealing here.

Short's David is a likeable, slightly off-beat individual while O'Toole's Kathy, with her cute little girl and easily-unnerved manner, is likewise endearing. The viewer can't help but root for these two to find each other in the midst of all this weirdness we call dating.

Kathy confesses to her best friend as the film opens "dating isn't fun." *Cross My Heart* explores this notion and makes it real. The leads are terrific. We aren't watching actors, we're watching people. As such, *Cross My Heart* works as both slice-of-life comedy-drama and, perhaps, a cautionary tale for those of us who haven't quite gotten the hang of socializing one-on-one with members of the opposite sex.



PRACTICING SAFE SEX: Martin Short and Annette O'Toole reveal some of the dating dilemmas which single men and women face in the '80s in the movie *Cross My Heart*.

WILNER'S VIDEO MADNESS

By NORMAN WILNER

Dawn Of The Dead

Colour, 1979, 126 min., \$29.95

The sequel to *Night Of The Living Dead*, this time in colour, is both a brutally effective horror film and a bizarre comedy. As hordes of flesh-eating zombies take over the world, four humans barricade themselves in a Pittsburgh shopping mall. Wonderfully disgusting stuff, originally banned by the Ontario Censor Board, and somehow released on video in its original uncut version. ****½.

Crimewave

Colour, 1987, 83 min., \$29.95

This film was released in July of this year for one week's run at the Carlton Cinemas and passed almost without notice. But consider the creative team: Joel and Ethan Coen, director-writers of *Blood Simple* and *Raising Arizona*, who wrote this one along with Sam Raimi, known for a couple of thrillers called *The Evil Dead* and *Evil Dead 2*. This one is a spoof of 1940s film noir, and works wonderfully as a goofball comedy, *Airplane!*-style. Rent it—or buy it—if you can find it. ***½.

The Evil Dead

Colour, 1982, 90 min., \$29.95

Five years ago, a bunch of Detroit filmmakers got together with a 16mm camera and less than a million dollars. Shot on such a shoestring, *The Evil Dead* is stupendous. Effective and—at times—hilariously funny, *Evil Dead* is the kind of movie we'd all like to make someday. The actors—particularly Bruce Campbell, who would later return in the sequel—seem to be having a good time, and the technical side of the film is very nicely handled, with an interesting "shaky-cam" sequence (basically a camera mounted on a two-by-four). As a horror film, *The Evil Dead* is terrific; as comedy, it works just as well. Be warned, though . . . the comedy here is secondary to the graphic horror. But you'll still enjoy it. ****.

F/X

Colour, 1986, 100 min., \$29.95

A very impressive thriller in which a special effects man is framed for murder, forced to become a fugitive and eventually tries to clear his name with the tricks of his trade. And, being what is, there are a lot of tricks involved. *F/X* is as hyperactive as it is well-plotted, and with the

exception of a bit of unnecessary violence toward the end, it is a taut, expertly made picture. Bryan Brown acquits himself nicely as Rollie Tyler, an Aussie effects genius, and Cliff DeYoung is the picture of government sleaze as a treacherous agent. Also around is Brian Dennehy as a good cop who thinks he knows what's going on. Of course, *nothing* is as it seems in *F/X*. Tremendous entertainment directed by Robert Mandel, who seems to have a knack for the stuff. ****½.

The Return Of The Living Dead

Colour, 1985, 90 min., \$29.95

By now you may have noticed a fondness for movies with "dead" in the title; I confess I am a sucker for a good zombie movie; *The Return of the Living Dead* is a diversion from the normal "kill-and-eat" pictures. In this unofficial sequel to *Night Of The Living Dead*, the zombies run around, talk, and—well—kill and eat. But these are hip, punk-rocker zombies, a lot more fun than most and kind of cute. For the discriminating horror fan, there's a plethora of special effects (some are even good!) and all kinds of creatures . . . even a nude zombie. More fun than most. ***.

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