

## Dark side of drugs in Zero

**Less Than Zero**  
Twentieth Century Fox  
Odeon, West Mall 8

review by Darren O'Donnell

The latest offering from Hollywood's brat pack has its moments, but unfortunately they are few and far between. *Less Than Zero* is loosely, very loosely, based on Bret Easton Ellis' nihilistic look at the fast-paced vacuous life of Southern California's wealthy kids.

The film follows Clay, a first year college student (Andrew McCarthy) as he returns from the East to visit his family, his unfaithful girlfriend Blair (Jami Gertz) and his crack-addicted friend Julian (Robert Downey, Jr.) for a relaxing Christmas vacation.

The first half of the film is easily the worst with endless shots of wildly decadent parties, sleazy nightclubs, and many, many, unhappily stoned people. The music is so prevalent that it seems like an hour long video.

McCarthy is satisfactory as the film's protagonist but Jami Gertz, as Blair, is not really

believable in any of the intense scenes. Their relationship flounders around for the first half but nothing really happens.

The film starts to get interesting when Julian's drug problem gets out of hand and he begins to prostitute himself in order to reimburse his dealer Rip (James Spader). Both Robert Downey, Jr. as Julian and James Spader as Rip give the best performances in the film and it is largely because of them, particularly Downey, that the film remains tolerable.

As the film whirrs on and Julian gets sucked further down the coke-lined drain, the purpose of the film becomes apparent. The bottom line on *Less Than Zero* is that it is essentially a colourful anti-drug film with the same one-sidedness that is to be expected. Scenes of ultra-fashionably dressed high-school girls giggling stupidly as blood drips from their noses after a snort, and Blair dramatically dumping her cocaine down the drain are just a few examples of the film bashing anti-drug messages over the audience's head.

This preaching is one of the key areas in



Life in the fast lane not so sweet in *Less Than Zero*

which the film deviates from the book. Clay, in the film, never once touches cocaine. In the novel, however, he is never without his powder, leaving the reader to decide what to think about his situation rather than, as in the film, telling us what to think.

Overall one is left not really caring about our hero and his problems, which is unfortunate since other than a lot of loud, bad music (a cover of Kiss' classic "I Wanna Rock n roll all nite" by Poison) and coloured lights, there isn't much else there.

these rituals and costumes made me think these people were marginally pathetic.

At times, there was some confusion in the storyline when Christine was fantasizing and the scenes jumped around with no clear transitions. Nevertheless, the film provides a humorous look at the hypocrisy of "moral" British society and the irony of the ending left me chuckling in my seat.

## Personal Services: a bizarre look at morality

**Personal Services**  
Vestron Pictures  
Principal Plaza  
Village Tree Mall

review by Curtis Forbes

*Personal Services* provides a window through which one can view the sexual adventures of some very kinky people. Terry Jones directs this film based on the story of Cynthia Pain, a London prostitute whose life became legend.

Julie Walters plays the aging prostitute Christine, who discovers that the old fashioned roll in the hay is on its way out and that, as one of her customers states, "the future lies in kinky people." Christine fanta-

sizes about being with her perfect man although reality tells her that her only escape is to marry a fat rich man named Sidney, who suffers from "BCSD (big car small dick)." These code words continue as the film becomes more humorous as it focuses on her customers.

These people, who seem to become more bizarre as the story progresses, range from the "naughty boy" who likes to be spanked but cautions "don't leave any marks," to the man who stands handcuffed and chained in a cell requesting "golden rain".

After Christine opens her own brothel, her career becomes more business-like and the moral mockery becomes more intense. At one of her parties, Christine states: "No,

this isn't a brothel. Brothels are Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. This is just a sex party."

Within the brothel, it becomes more evident that her customers are not just looking for sex, but are looking for an outlet for their fantasies. Some are willing to pay her to be slaves and work in her garden, while others simply want a place to go and dress in deviant clothing.

Sometimes the humour is shadowed by the recognition of how desperate some people become in trying to satisfy themselves. In one scene, a man is completely bound in chains to a chair, gagged with a rubber hood and then placed in a dark box for an hour and a half. How erotic. The elaboration of

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