



Rick Springfield makes his motion picture debut as rock 'n' roll star Jamie Roberts in "Hard to Hold."

the movies

Dan Greenberg

Newest teen entry misses on all counts

The plague of summer teen movies, with heavy emphasis on rock music, hit early this year as Hollywood moved to take advantage of record attendance. "Hard to Hold," which may not make it, to May, is a new entry in the box-office sweetstakes.

The film lacks the extended music and dancing sequences that make "Footloose" successful. The early run at box-office success of "Police Academy" (\$20 million in 10 days) shows that audiences appreciate fast-paced comedy. "Hard to Hold" doesn't compete in that arena.

Rather, the movie is a dreary attempt to win the affections of teen rock music enthusiasts with semi-soft rock music that won't offend adults who also dig old-fashioned romantic musicals. Old-time romance and rock music don't fit in one package.

The closing 34 minutes (it seemed longer) was such slow-paced, boring romantic melodrama that I was ready for the closing rock number, ready to clap and dance in the aisles to release boredom's frustrations.

BUT THE NUMBER was over before I hit the aisle. Back to my seat and the closing moments of maudlin melodrama.

The story is older than the movies. The traveling man meets the girl in residence. This time it's rock star Jamie Roberts (Rick Springfield) madly in love with special ed teacher Diana Lawson (Janet Elber). They have a rapturous affair after he smashes her car (they have to meet somehow) and she becomes convinced he doesn't have herpes.

But there are complications. He's already got a girl in the band, songwriter Nicky Nides (Patti Hansen), and teacher Diana is attached to her father, Johnny Lawson (Albert Salmi), a widower and longshoreman who wanted to go down to the sea in ships but played home in his cups to raise his daughter. Naturally, she can't leave home to go on the road with her hero, even after Dad dies.

So there you have it, friends, Dimensore Freud at its worst. Of course, rock star Robert's romantic agony upsets his music and the show doesn't go on. His lovesick posturings continue as Nicky Nides wants to play music and bedroom but James Roberts only has eyes for Teach.

That creates a bit of dramatic tension, but not enough to hold audience interest. Rick Springfield may have a spot in the Top 40 but his future as a romantic lead in movies seems dim, even if better material is available.

JANET ELBER manages to rise above Plot No. 101. She looks and acts the charming San Francisco lady, a la Gene Tierney, and creates as much character as possible under the circumstances.

San Francisco, by the way, with its posh street and cafe scenes, is an unlikely place to set such a film. Certainly rock stars play S.F. and stay at the Fairmont but that marginal sophistication is insufficient to attract mature audiences, particularly when the film's conventional romance is so simple-minded.

Simple-minded, even maudlin romanticism, of course, was not the intent. Director Larry Pearce claims "Hard to Hold" is a romance set in America's most romantic city. But it comes across much like a letter to Dear Abby, one she was wise enough not to answer.

As a rock musical "Hard to Hold" lacks enough musical presentation to interest rock fans. There are only six minutes of actual concert performance plus some rehearsal sessions and a new-wave-club sequence. Concert numbers were done in the Los Angeles Sports Arena with more than 10,000 spectators at a free concert staged for this film.

All that effort wasn't worth the final result and "Hard to Hold" is easy to leave.



Patti Hansen is Nicky Nides, a songwriter who is the rock star's ex-girlfriend.

table talk

Crane's menu

Moderately priced food is a feature at the attractive new Crane's restaurant and lounge in the Quality Inn at 1801 N. Woodward, north of Square Lake Road in Pontiac. A charbroiled, eight-ounce New York strip steak is \$7.95, a 12-ounce \$10.95. Other entrees include such specialties as Steak Malabar — medallions of tenderloin sautéed with vegetables and brandy served over fettuccine — and Chicken Mandarin — chicken breast sautéed in butter, brandy with green pepper, mushrooms, almonds and mandarin oranges, on a bed of rice. Gourmet

burgers, sandwiches, salads, sides and soups also are available.

Wine tastings

"Evenings of Winetasting" continue at Benjie's Fish and Seafood Restaurant, 2650 Orchard Lake Road, Sylvan Lake. The restaurant, which features a wine bar, will spotlight the Wines of Alsace, with wine authority Frank Lewis, on Monday, April 23, and Wines of Michigan, with wine authority David Brown, Monday, June 4. First tasting in the series was held this week, Wines of Germany, with expert Paul Mann. Reservations are due the Wednesday

prior to the tasting. Proprietor Benjie also recommends a 7 p.m. dinner reservation. Each tasting session is \$15. For more information phone 682-7730.

— Ethel Simmons





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