



Life turns topsy-turvy for Theodore Pierce (Gene Wilder) when he becomes infatuated with a gorgeous woman he encounters by chance in "The Woman in Red."

the movies

Dan Greenberg

Wilder's newest should be funnier

"The Woman in Red" is a pleasant summer comedy but not as good as it could or should have been considering the writing-directing-acting talents of Gene Wilder and his excellent supporting cast.

Theodore Pierce (Wilder) is a successful San Francisco public information officer. He's happily married to Didi (Judith Ivey), the proud father of two children, Missy (Kira Stempel) and Becky (Robin Igic), and a highly regarded friend in a tennis, drinking foursome with Buddy (Charles Grodin), Joe (Joseph Bologna) and Michael (Michael Hudson).

Only cloud on the horizon of Teddy's life is his daughter's punk boyfriend, Shelly, nicely deadpanned by Michael Zorek.

But middle-aged lust rears its ugly head as Teddy becomes obsessed with sexual fantasies after a chance encounter with the gorgeous model, Charlotte, played by Kelly LeBrock, in her own right a noted model. Once encountered, Charlotte's beauty and sexual attraction overwhelm Teddy's good sense and a series of humorous episodes follow.

"THE WOMAN in Red" has definite overtones of "10," but that's all right. Certainly Wilder's curly hair and wide-eyed, innocent, round face are the source of considerable humor because we know in our hearts that neither Wilder nor anyone else but a newborn babe could be so innocent.

But "The Woman in Red" has too many stories under way for one film, particularly when their potentials are never fully realized and never completely integrated with one another.

In addition to Wilder's obsessive rush to the lovely Charlotte's bed, there are his three friends and the complications of their personal lives intertwined with Teddy's wife, Didi; his children; and a frustrated, single co-worker, Ma Milner (Gilda Radner), who erroneously believes that she is the object of Wilder's sexual chase. That belief stands off by itself too far from the main plot to realize its comic potential.

The question of sexual obsession is intertwined in all these stories. Certainly that's good material for a comedy of human foibles.

Teddy's friends all have unusual sex lives. It is rather strange that Teddy has waited so long to get on the bandwagon. Joe is a philandering husband whose wife is constantly leaving him and constantly returning as he pledges fidelity, soon to be transgressed; Michael is an adulterer of particular tastes; and Buddy has his own, unorthodox sexuality with which to deal.

CERTAINLY ALL these stories and characters should provide ample material for a rich, comic film. To some extent they do, for "The Woman in Red" has a number of laugh-provoking sequences. Unfortunately, they are just that: humorous episodes not well integrated with the main flow of the film.

Radner is a very funny lady and has just the right, pinched-face comedy to pull off the frustrated and fluffed co-worker routine, but her lines are limited to the obvious, as are her comic routines — key-scratching his car, bending his aerial (nice Freudian overtones there) and spilling ink on his desk — all too broad and lacking the subtlety characteristic of her style.

Similarly, the intersections of the lives of Teddy's three friends seem forced and those stories never really impact on Teddy and his obsession with any great force. Not that these episodes weren't funny and, in one case, very touching, but they didn't relate to one another as well as they should have and that detracts from "The Woman in Red."

As for that woman, LeBrock is very attractive and seems capable of acting the model's role as well as living it — certainly a plus for this film, as is Wilder's humorous talent. "The Woman in Red" is a pleasant film for a summer's night and not bad for the afternoon, either.



Milner (Gilda Radner), who works with Teddy, mistakenly thinks she is the object of his affections.

what's at the movies

ANOTHER COUNTRY (Unrated). Adapted from Lillian H. Smith's 1955 novel, this is a story of a young man in an English boys school.

CAREFUL, HE MIGHT HEAR YOU (PG). Australian film exploring the bitter struggle between two sisters to gain possession of young boy whose mother died in childbirth.

DREAMSCAPE (PG-13). Top secret project targeting the President, with a nightmare for a weapon, starring Max Von Sydow, Christopher Plummer, Eddie Albert and Kate Capshaw.

GHOSTBUSTERS (PG). Billy Murray, Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis as parapsychology research students trying to rid New York of menacing ghosts.

GREMLINS (PG). Technically well-done story of exorcist pet whose offspring turn mean. Hoyt Axton, Zach Galligan and Phoebe Cates in a Spielberg film too gross for the under-12 set.

INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM (PG). Harrison Ford is back in another Spielberg epic adventure schlock " Raiders." Probably violent enough for an R rating.

THE MUPPETS TAKE MANHATTAN (G). Gonzo, Fozzie, Animal and Scooter star in Muppet's Broadway musical, and Miss Piggy finds romance.

PURPLE RAIN (R). Another rock music film with family problems mixed in. Features Prince and Apollonia Kotero.

RED DAWN (PG-13). Eight high school students resist armed invasion of the United States.

REVENGE OF THE NERDS (R). Tasteless, colorless college comedy.

TIGHTROPE (R). Clint Eastwood is a detective in a thriller about a psychotic who stalks victims, writes their lives.

MOVIE RATING GUIDE

- G - General audiences. All ages admitted.
- PG - Parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for pre-teens.
- PG-13 - Parents are strongly cautioned to give special guidance for attendance of children under 13. Some material may be inappropriate for young children.
- R - Restricted. Under 18 requires accompanying parent or guardian.
- X - No one under 18 admitted.

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