



Cher is Rusty, a biker lady, whose boyfriend is played by Sam Elliott, in "Mask."



the movies

Dan  
Greenberg

## Film's young stars have best moments in overdone 'Mask'

Cher claims she sat down and cried for 45 minutes after she read the script for "Mask." Unfortunately she shed maudlin tears of sentimentality, for her performance (as well as that by the rest of the adults in the cast) misses the whole point.

The beauty — and best qualities — of the human spirit shine through the tears of adversity. Those tears, reflecting the joy of conflict and survival, are the ones she should have shed.

Fortunately, for the sake of the film and its audiences, sensitive performances by Eric Stoltz and Laura Dern save "Mask" from totally maudlin melodrama and an overdose of stereotypes.

Rocky Dennis (Eric Stoltz) is afflicted with a genetic abnormality which deposits excess calcium in his skull, distorting his face beyond human bounds. He doesn't need a mask on Halloween. Much to his credit, Stoltz communicates the strength of character Dennis needs to face the world so badly disfigured. Not only does Rocky face the world, he feels good about himself and is optimistic about life, his girlfriend and his long-planned motorcycle trip across Europe.

ROCKY'S GIRLFRIEND, DIANA, is well-to-do, lovely, blonde and blind. She and Rocky meet at a summer camp for the blind where he is a counselor and she a camper.

Naturally, their love is doomed by his health and her family, but they manage to experience the joys of love and communication. They express the eternal hope humanity has in the next generation.

Dern and Stoltz achieve this with their performances, avoiding the histrionics normally expected. Instead, with simplicity and restraint, they express hope, love and expectation, none of which one normally would expect under the circumstances.

Stoltz, in particular, with his central role, extensive screen time and cumbersome make-up mask, achieves an inspirational quality with calm, restraint and a positive view of life. The strength and serenity of Stoltz's portrayal defuses the revulsion expected of such deformity.

Besides the afflictions their characters possess, Stoltz and Dern are faced with a bunch of tiresome, stereotyped adults that deserve no sympathy and have no motivation. If Peter Bogdanovich, the director, wants our concern for these characters, he is obligated to develop some kind of justification. That they are deprived because they were deprived (of we know not what), just won't wash.

ROCKY'S MOTHER Rusty (clever nickname for a redhead) is a tough biker lady whose predilection for sex and drugs probably developed because her father, Abe (Richard Dysart), is a nasty old fool, short-tempered, demanding and unforgiving. Her mother, Evelyn (Estelle Getty), is a silly, simpering woman who manages to be annoying just standing around.

Cher, as Rusty, just doesn't pull it off. She's tough, she's drunk, she's zonked, but mostly she's just wooden, as in a drug-induced stupor. Cher's best moments in the film are with her son and those moments of tenderness are effective because of Stoltz. Cher plays off him but the scenes are his.

The bikers who form Rusty's circle are such cliché characters that they should have been animated cartoons. Sam Elliott as Rusty's current, all-time great love is physically attractive, if you like unhaven bikers, but totally ineffective with his repertoire of one facial expression.

GIVEN ANY OPPORTUNITY to act, Elliott looks over his shoulder with half-lidded eyes and speaks his lines in a semi-gravely, pseudo-Southern drawl. That is not acting.

One exception to condemnation of the adult roles, Dennis Burkley as Dezer, the big, gruff biker with a speech problem, manages to express warmth and humanity.

Bogdanovich and scenarist Anna Hamilton Phelan have dealt so extensively in underdeveloped, adult stereotypes without motivation that it may be unfair to blame the actors and actresses.

In spite of all that, Stoltz and Dern rescue the film from its script and direction with their sensitive performances and with help from some pretty good music.



Laura Dern is Diana, a blind girl with whom Rusty's disfigured son Rocky, played by Eric Stoltz, falls in love.

# Annual WineFest features auction

An auction of fine wines will highlight the Ann Arbor Art Association's third annual WineFest on Friday, April 12, at the Ann Arbor Inn. The event

will benefit community art programs of the association.

Each ticket purchased will be accompanied by "auction dollars," redeemable for \$10 on the purchase of a lot of wine. For ticket information contact the Ann Arbor Art Association at 994-8004.

Gary Andrus, winemaker at Pine Ridge Winery in Napa, Calif., is honorary chair, heading a committee of wine and food specialists who assist the auction committee. Andrus will open the auction evening with an address to the audience.

Andrus first became interested in wines when, as a member of the U.S. Ski Team, he stayed with a family in Australia who made wines. Pine Ridge Winery, founded in 1978, makes premium wines of four varieties: chardonnay, cabernet sauvignon, merlot and chenin blanc. Pine Ridge has won 42 medals for its wines.

SOME 150 LOTS of wine composed from more than 700 bottles will be auctioned at the WineFest. A silent auction begins at 7 p.m., followed by the live auction at 8. Wines are donated from private cellars and include wines from France, California, Michigan, Italy and Australia.

Wines represent a range of prices and quality, to appeal to buyers ranging from collectors to recent converts.

A gourmet sampler of wines provided by Ann Arbor area restaurants and caterers will accompany the auction. Larry Manderville and Friends will perform classical jazz before and after the auction. Flowers provided by area florists will bedeck the ballroom, reception area and buffet rooms.

## Winetasters greet actor

Actor and comedy star Pat Paulsen, who has launched a new winery, will speak before the Winetasters group 7-9 p.m. Sunday, April 14, at Glen Oaks County Golf Course, 13 Mile between Middlebelt and Orchard Lake roads, in Farmington Hills.

The wine tasting is open to the public for \$12 per person. For reservations, send a check to: Winetasters, 185 Wilton Road, Troy 48068.

Several of Paulsen's wines will be poured, and he will discuss his wines reverently and not so. Snacks and munchies will be provided.

Paulsen is known for his Cherry County Playhouse, a summer theater in Traverse City, and also for his long-in-check campaign for the U.S. presidency.



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