



the movies Dan Greenberg

Women are friends despite same man, in fascinating film

"Just Between Friends" (PG-13) nicely straddles the thin line between domestic tragedy and melodrama while managing to be entertaining and emotionally stimulating.

Someone remarked acerbically that Mary Tyler Moore gets younger and cuter every day, but in "Friends" she controls the sardine can with an effective, low-key characterization of a dependent woman who, to survive, must become independent.

Holly Davis (Moore) is happily married to Chip (Ted Danson) who is devoted to her and their teenage children, Kim (Susan Rinnell) and Jeff (Timothy Githes). Chip is a seismologist whose good friend and co-worker Harry Crandall (Sam Waterston) helps Chip live a double life with TV newscaster Sandy Lindap (Christine Lahti). Girlfriend Sandy, in turn, becomes close friends with Holly who works as a substitute aerobics/exercise instructor.

Only in the movies... but if you think about it, life's like that and it's often hard to tell whether people are discussing family intrigues or the latest episode of "General Hospital."

"Just Between Friends" has a complicated plot, but part of the film's pleasure is following developments. Often it seems as if the film is reaching far beyond credible boundaries. At each step, however, the resolution is reasonable and the film works well.

Excellent, naturalistic acting is one reason that this emotional roller-coaster is a pleasant ride. Literate, intelligent, amusing writing and directing by Allan Burns is another. Both major and minor roles are performed with tightly reined control so that seemingly exaggerated situations become plausible.

Teenagers in films often are bratty, unpleasant characters as are successful professional women having affairs with husbands of vulnerable women who have devoted themselves to home and family.

Not so here as Kim and Jeff are restrained in performance and, of course, limited by the script. Lahti is alternately a brusque, streetwise, sharp-tongued, tender and vulnerable woman trying to make it in television and on the home-front as well. Her performance is fine-tuned to those oppositions. Similarly with the other principals whose performances are exceptionally real and natural.

"THE OFFICIAL STORY" is Argentina's power-

ful and touching expiation of rightist guilt for the thousands who were tortured, murdered and are now "missing," the fascist euphemism for elimination of the opposition.

"The Official Story" traces Alicia's (Norma Aleandro) horrifying discovery that her husband, Roberto (Hector Alterio), is involved in the disappearance. The horrible secret of how he obtained a child, Gaby (Analia Castro), for adoption destroys their marriage.

In her obsessive search for Gaby's parentage, Alicia learns what she and her sheltered circle have been ignoring for many years, their good life has been guaranteed by rightist repression.

Aleandro deservedly won Best Actress at Cannes and Cartagena Film Festivals as Alicia, and the young Castro, delightful as daughter Gaby, should win something during this awards season. "The Official Story" has been nominated as Best Foreign Film.

In spite of all that, however, the film is not as artistically, emotionally or politically as satisfying as its Brazilian cousin, "The Kiss of the Spider Woman," which should win a few Oscars tonight. "Official Story" is emotionally powerful in subject and treatment but am-ying in technique—elliptical editing, overdone bridging sound and unexplained plot elements—none of which are fatal, but they do reduce the film to good when it could have been great.

"9-1-2 WEEKS" (R) is the title, not the length, of a Kim Basinger-Mickey Rourke exercise in boredom. Supposedly this is a "hot" film about a sado-masochistic love affair between an art gallery type (Basinger) and a big-time Wall Street operator (Rourke) who always needs a shave.

For an hour-and-three-quarters, the SM crowd is treated to an endless series of closeups that occasionally zoom in for extreme closeups. Visual variety is provided by closeups at odd angles.

"9-1-2 Weeks" is supposed to be about a sado-masochistic couple, but the sadism is entirely on the part of the filmmakers while the masochism is deeply ingrained in anyone who willingly sits through such a painful experience. Good soundtrack. Buy the tape and forget the flick. Or, at the very least, repress it.



In "Just Between Friends," Mary Tyler Moore finds out that her new best friend, played by Christine Lahti, is actually her husband's girlfriend. Also starring are Ted Danson as the husband and Sam Waterston as his friend.

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table talk

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