

GOING TO THE MOVIES



'My Life' dream true for 'Ghost' screenwriter

BY KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER

If you wish upon a star, dreams can come true. They did for award-winning screenwriter Bruce Joel Rubin who makes his directorial debut with "My Life" opening Friday at metro Detroit movie theaters.

"I make movies about things I care about," said Rubin over lunch at Bouquets Restaurant in the Radisson Plaza Hotel in Southfield.

"My Life," like "Ghost" for which Rubin won an Academy Award for Best Screen Play Written Directly for the Screen in 1990, is about life, death, and the power of love. It seems right to the heart reminding audiences that life is precious, and "Every Moment Counts."

Bob and Gail Jones (Michael Keaton and Nicole Kidman) are expecting their first child, when they discover Bob has cancer and might not live to see the baby.

While fighting the illness, Bob decides to make a video of his life as a gift to the child. In the pro-

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cess of making the video, he realizes he has no understanding of who he is or what his life has been about.

His journey of self-discovery, which includes a trip to his childhood home in Detroit to reconcile old hurts with his family, becomes a celebration of life.

It is a journey that Rubin, who grew up in Detroit and graduated from Mumford High School, took. In some ways, "My Life" is his life.

"This movie is not about death, it's about life," he said. "It makes you think about your mortality. It's a spiritual wake-up call. Tell people you love them today. These are lessons that need to be told."

They are lessons Rubin has learned well. Family and friends were the reason he was in town. "I planned a screening of the film for them. I wanted to have a private moment with them, and do it as a tribute to my mother," he said.

Rubin's mother, Sandra died Sept. 10. His father, Jim, and brother Gary, live in West Bloom-

field.

Those who know the Rubin family will recognize Sandra as Aunt Sophia in a scene in "My Life." She also appeared in "Ghost" as the older nun. In "My Life," she greets Bob and Gail at the family home in Detroit with open arms, a hug for each, in a living room crowded with relatives. Rubin said Aunt Sophia was very much like his mother — "warm and very welcoming."

"I wanted to write a movie for those who left Detroit and those who stayed," said Rubin. "Roots are important."

In the movie, Bob is the successful owner of public relations firm, and living in Los Angeles. His brother, Paul Ivanovich (Bradley Whitford) stayed home in Detroit to help run the family business.

Bob shuns his Ukrainian lower middle-class roots and changes name from Ivanovich to Jones.

Bob's parents Rose (Rebecca Schull) and Bill Ivanovich (Michael Constantine) haven't come to visit him in California, because Rose is afraid to fly.

Much of the Detroit that Rubin remembers is gone. Scenes depicting Detroit in the early 1960s were



MEARICK MORTON

shot in Chicago. Rubin said they scouted for locations in Detroit, but couldn't find what they were looking for. The Ukrainian wedding scene was shot in St. Nicholas Church.

A big part of Bob's spiritual journey includes making peace with his parents. Just before he dies he tells them — "You didn't

do anything wrong. You did the best you could."

"This movie is about re-embracing your life," said Rubin who said he was inspired to write to script after waking up in the middle of the night with severe stomach pains.

"I woke up in such pain that I was convinced I had a terminal

disease. As I lay there, I wondered what would happen if I died. Would my children ever know me? It was then I considered making a video tape about my life to leave as a gift to my children. Then, as is often the case when I have an interesting idea, I thought 'Hey, this is a good idea for a movie!'"

'Look Who's Talking Now' provides good-natured fun



JOHN MONAGHAN

I've often wondered what thoughts race through the mind of man's best friend. One thing is for certain: they must be a lot funnier than the gags in "Look Who's Talking Now."

In this third installment in the popular series, John Travolta and Kirstie Alley return as a happily married couple trying to stay that way despite two rambunctious kids and harried job schedules.

"My wife and I are talking about the D-word," James confesses to his employer, the lusty Fortune 500 business owner who perks up considerably at the thought of his getting a divorce. Actually, he's referring to the dog and his wife have finally decided to get for their kids.

As chance would have it, they end up with two dogs, Rocks, a scruffy mongrel from the pound, can't get beyond doing his duty in the house and chewing on his mistress' shoes. He thinks his

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name is "No" because that's almost all anyone says to him.

The other dog, a prissy poodle named Daphne, arrives with crates of Evian water and an elaborate dog house that looks like a castle.

And just like the previous "Look Who's Talking" movies (which tracked the thoughts of babies and toddlers) the latest has canine voice-overs supplied by Danny DeVito and Diane Keaton. Like the popular actors who supply the voices for Disney cartoons, they're basically spinning versions of themselves: earthy and plain-talking on his end; fussy and neurotic on hers.

You'll even note references to "Lady and the Tramp," Disney's animated canine fantasy, when Daph and Rocks head out for a night on the town and consider a spaghetti dinner. They end up digging through the trash at a Chinese restaurant instead.

Not surprisingly, they overcome their differences (she calls him a

"tick-magnet" while he accuses her of being in-bred) by about the middle of the film, leaving the tension between their owners. Are James' business trips really just an excuse to get away overnight with his sexy boss? Will he be home for Christmas?

For his part, Travolta is often quite engaging in one of his frequent screen appearances. He's chunked up considerably since his lean, mean "Saturday Night Fever" days, fitting surprisingly comfortably in the unglamorous role of a harried husband and daddy.

Alley, whose affected horn of a voice I still haven't warmed up to since "Cheers," registers the same cross-eye facial expression for every situation. While Travolta is funny and self-parodying during elaborate fantasy sequences, she has little personality to play off.

Kids may actually lap up the jokes in "Look Who's Talking Now." Parents will find that despite off-colored gags about "crotcheting" and "butt-sniffing," it's basically good-natured and



JOSEPH LACERNA

Best buddy: Mikey (David Gallagher) cuddles with his new best friend, a street-smart mutt named Rocks who sounds just like Danny DeVito, in the comedy "Look Who's Talking Now."

harmless fun.

And I have a sinking feeling there's more on the way. The "Look Who's Talking" saga won't be concluded when the fat lady sings, but when the family's sofa and love seat finally get into the act.

To leave a message for John Monaghan, dial 953-2047, mailbox number 1868, on a touch-tone phone, fax him a note at 591-7279, or write him in care of Entertainment, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

FILM CLIPS

"LOOK WHO'S TALKING NOW"

Released by: Tri-Star Pictures
Starring: John Travolta, Kirstie Alley, with the voices of Danny DeVito and Diane Keaton
Directed by: Tom Ropelewski
Produced by: Jonathan D. Krane
Written by: Tom Ropelewski and Leslie Dixon
Rated: PG - 13 (Some material may not be appropriate for pre-teens)
Running time: 97 minutes
Rating (out of a possible four):

Key: Don't miss it ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Strongly recommended ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Worth a look ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Wait for video ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

UPCOMING MOVIES

Action, drama, romance — there's something for everyone at the movies. Here's a list of what's in the wings:

■ Opening Friday, Nov. 12, "Equinox" — The story of identical twins, separated at birth 30 years earlier, and their individual struggles to survive in the city of Empire.

"The Three Musketeers" — A live-action comedy/adventure in which the Musketeers journey to stop the King's adviser from overthrowing the crown.

"Carlito's Way" — A once notorious gangster dreams of settling down with his wife, but plans are thwarted by old friends and rivals.

"Equinox" — The story of identical twins, separated at birth 30 years earlier, and their individual struggles to survive in the city of Empire.

"Ernest Rides Again" — Ernest P. Worrell is back — and history will never be the same in this comedy for all ages.

Dig up your dog pictures for contest

There's still time to enter our "Dogs say the darndest things" contest. Send us a picture of your dog, with a caption of what your dog is saying to enter our "Dogs say the darndest things contest."

The first 28 entries (limit one per family) will receive a large youth size sweat shirt from the

movie "Look Who's Talking Now." The grand prize winner will receive a package with two youth size sweat shirts and an assortment of "Look Who's Talking Now" memorabilia.

To enter, send a snapshot of your dog, with a caption to: Keely Wygonik, Taste/Entertainment

Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers Inc., 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. For more information, call 953-2105.

If you would like your photograph returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Deadline for entries is Monday, Nov. 15.

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