'A Life Less Ordinary' not the usual comedy fare



But if you really want to see where Danny Boyle's head is at, then check out "A Life Less Ordinary," the Scottish director's third and re.

quirkiest feature.

The recommendation comes with a warning. This is not the best movie of the year. In fact, much of it deem't work at all. But Boyle and his compadres (including producer Andrew Macdonald and writer John Hodge) bounce so many crazy ideas at you that the whole enterprise entertains despite itself.

Borrowing freely from old

"Shallow Grave" may be tighter; "Trainspotting" more outrageous and in-your-face. But if you really

"It Happened One Night"), a recently fired janitor (Ewan McGregor) kidnaps a spoiled heiress (Cameron Diaz), daugh eiress (Cameron Diaz), daugh eires (Teman that fired him. Once safely away, he has no idea what to do with her.

The twist is: She doesn't mind being kidnapped (it's happened before) and ends up giving him lessons so that he doesn't botch the job. The whole ordeal, it turns out, has been orchestrated by a pair of angels (played by Holly Hunter and Delroy Lindo). According to heavenly law, they must happily unite these two star-crossed lovers or spend eternity stuck back on earth.

In a clever treatise on the way movies work, the angels decide to place them in perpetual joopardy. After all, how many movies have you seen where a mismatched couple becomes lovers after a few close brushes with death?

Hunter, especially, is a hoot. Outfitted with a mane of Breck

Hunter, especially, is a hoot.
Outfitted with a mane of Breck

Girl blonde hair and Nancy Sinatra boots made for walkin', her portrayal lurches back and forth between a cigar-chewing bounty hunter to a Bond-style Russian agent. She's obviously having a ball so why can't we?

Much of the charm in "A Life Less Ordinary" lies in Boyle regular McGregor ("Trainspotting's memorable toilet divor), who plays loser Robert as a likable slacker with a lousy haircut. After losing his job, his girl-friend, his apartment and car in a single day, Robert does the impossible by growing more hapless as the film goes on.

The leggy Diaz, in her most substantial role to date, is one of the film's wild cards. In moments she's incredible, like the pleading call she makes to her father, pretending that she's tortured. But in the longer bouts of dialogue with McGregor, she's emotionally out of her depth.

"A Life Less Ordinary" gives Diaz her second opportunity this

year to croak through a karaoko song, this time in a redneek bar where kidnapper and kidnappes atop out for a night on the town. The resulting dream soquence become yet another clever movie reference, with the black-clad Diaz striking a classic Ann Margeet pose from "Viva Las Vegas."

Far more fun than someone like Godard (who the movie also owes a debt to) would have made it, "Life" goes on with one improvised idea after another. If this one doesn't work, another clever shot or plot twist is close behind. Though not everyone's cup of tea, the movie has received a surprising number of pans, especially by those so kind to Oliver Stone's criminal "U-Turu". While both take on the overindulged road movie genre, Boyle's trip is the one worth taking.

John Monaghan welcomes your calls and comments. To leave John a voice mail message, dial (313) 953-2047 on a touchtone phone, mailbox 1866.



Comedy: Ewan McGregor and kidnap "victim Cameron Diaz take a break in "A Life Less Ordinary."

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A tale of the future that charts the lives of cilize members of the Mobile Infantry, a corps of dedicated young men and women societies fighting aids by aids in the utilimate intergalectic war – the both lie to save humankind. Based on the book by Robert A. Heinlein, Stars Casper Van Dien, Dina Meyer, Denisø Richards.

TTELLING LIES IN AMERICA*
The story of a Hungarian immigrant boy's experiences in the world of rock and roil radio and his assimilation into American society in the early 1960s. Stars Kevin Bacon, Brad Renfro.

"WINGS OF THE DOVE"

Drama: Catherine Sloper (Jennifer Jason Leigh, right) is a shy, awkward but wealthy young woman who suddenly finds herself courted by smooth and dashing, but penniless Morris Townsend (Ben Chaplin) in "Wash-ington Square."

Bosed on Henry James' passionate turn-of-the century romance, the story of a woman whose head end heart are in conflict between 19th century values and 20th century passions. Sters Hele-na Bonham Carter.

"BEAN"
In this big screen version of the popular
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um curator finds himself the victim of mistaken identity.

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SCREEN SCENE



Crime thriller: Lane Dixon (Jared Leto, left) plays a mysterious drifter who crosses the paths with an itinerant railroad worker Bob Godall (Danny Glover) in "Switch-Back."

A sampling of what's playing at alternative movie theaters across metro Detroit as reviewed by John Monaghan.

Detroit Film Theatre Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward, Dotroit. Call. (313) 833-2323 for information. (\$5.50; \$4.50 student/soniors.) "M" (Gormany-1931). Friday, Oct. 31 to Sunday, Nov. 2 (call for showtimes). Peter Lorro creates an unforgettable portrait of a child killer who terrorizes Germany between the wars. Directed by Fritz Lang, this early sound classic has been restored by the Munich Film Archive, with seven minutes of additional footage and newly printed subtitles.

"To Spoak the Unapoakable: The Message of Elic Wiesel" (Hungary/France-1990). 7 p.m. Monday, Nov. 3. The film begins with the inauguration of the Holocaust Memorial Museum, then accompanies Nobel Prize-winning author Judit Elek

as he returns to his home in the Carpathian Mountains.

Main Art Theatre 118 N. Main Street at 11 Mile, Royal Oak, Films play through at least Thursday, unless noted other-information. (\$36.05, \$4 students, CISA-1997). Roy Sheider, Blythe Danner, and Julianne Moore star in this independent drama about a family that must learn to confront hidden truths.

"Washington Square" (USA-1997). Roy Sheider, Blythe Danner, and Julianne there is the single of the start to confront hidden truths.

"Washington Square" (USA-1997). Jennifer Jasson-Leigh and Albert Finney star in this adaptation of a Henry James novel about an awkward rich girl caught between her over-protective father and a penniless suit-or.

The Full Monty" (Britain-1997). Confette verticated from the start of the th

or.

"The Full Monty" (Britain-1997). One of the year's most delightful films is about a group of unemployed steel workers who decide to try their luck as exotic dancers. The only problem: their

33.75 matinees; \$3 twilight) 3

"The House of Yes" (USA) 1997). A psychological comply probes the mystery of a family whose strangeness somehow links with the JFK assassination.