

'Bridget Jones' Diary' is better in book form

ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

London (AP) — For a film whose heroine obsesses over her weight, it's a shame that Bridget Jones's Diary should be such a slim affair.

That's unlikely to matter to the hordes of readers who turned Helen Fielding's 1996 chronicle of the lovesick Londoner into an international best seller.

Told in diary fashion, the book charts a year in the life of the hapless publishing assistant who wants nothing more than to set-tle down with a man, cut back on cigarettes and booze, sort out her fractious relationship with her ■ Told in diary fashion, the book charts a year in the life of the hapless publishing assistant who wants nothing more than to settle down with a man, cut back on cigarettes and booze, sort out her fractious relationship with her parents and lose some weight.

parents and lose some weight.

Go for it, girl!

Which is exactly what the Bridget of Fielding's delightfully larky book does, aided no end by her supportive triu of friends Shazza, Jude and Tom and some good luck in the romance sweep-

stakes.

The novel even boasts an ending that manages to revel in the same swony romantic literature—complete with a four-poster bed—that it gently sends up. Relationships are indeed possible, Fielding suggests, especially if you can manage not to judge a

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In this age of the emaciated female star, Renee Zellweger dis-plays real courage for someone in her thespian prime by parad-ing thighs as fleshy as those that get mercilessly scrutnized by director Sharon Maguire's cam-

And the accent will prove no obstacle to those in the United States. Britons may quibble, but in a class-conscious country the accent means so much more about where you're from and what your background is.

More problematic is the fact – at least to an American observer resident in London – that although her vowel sounds are accurately pitched, Zellweger never really seems British.

Partly, that's to do with a lot of "face acting" (scrunched-up cheeks, a downturned mouth and the like) that a different, more seasoned director might have toned down.

And Zollweger hasn't quite managed to forsake the over-ingratiation so much used by American performers and so scorned by their British col-

leagues.

It's as if no one trusted the very real charm of the book, whose 32-year-old heroine is sure she'll die 'fat and alone' only to end up with the dishy Mark Darcy (played by Colin Firth). Zellweger projects eagerness in a most un-Bridgetlike way, insofar as this is a woman who imagines railway announcements blaring to all and sundry the state of her thighs.

The aim presumably, was to

The aim, presumably, was to make Bridget Jones a lovable Brit-blockbuster on the order of Four Weddings and a Funeral and Notting Hill and with Hugh Grant once again on hand as the co-star.

But the new film isn't as well written or directed as the earlier ones, and it's silly and not a little bit crude where those provious movies were blithe and breezy.

Action

Novel to screen: Helen Fielding's popular story about a 30-something singleton named Bridget Jones has made it to the silver screen and stars actress Renee Zellweger in the coveted title role.

Bridget's trio of chums seem to have been excised nearly to death in the cutting room, while the two men fare best, playing a complementary set of Cambridge buddies, each with a vested interest in Bridget.

interest in Bridget.
Firth's dourness has never been seen to such deliciously comic effect, and admirers of this actor will smile at his presence as another screen Darey having already played Jane Austen's Mr. Darcy in the BBC's Pride and Prejudice.

Grant is in terrific form as Bridget's boss and sometime bedmate, Daniel Cleaver. He is first seen to the strains on the soundtrack of Respect, looking as

if he is suppressing a burp, and he ends up battling the bottled-up Darcy for Bridget's affections.

The parental roles are particu-larly well filled by Jim Broad-bent, with his comically bemused countenance as Bridget's father, and Gemma Jones as his flighty "daft cow" of a wife.

No less crucial are the loca-tions of a London where it seems forever to be snowing. So what if it the real London almost never es the powdery stuff?

Bridget Jones's Diary isn't meant to be taken literally or even all that seriously. The film is like a dusting of snow that melts in the mind the minute it's

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Turns out the Pussycats are awns in a scheme to implant subliminal messages in music that turn listeners into con-

'Josie' barely scratches out a plot on screen

LOS ANGELES (AP) - It's a LUS ANGELES (AP) - It's a bad sign when a reviewer gets in to see a movie for free, yet still wants his money back.

People who plunk down nine bucks or so for Josic and the Pussycats will really have some-thing to youl about.

Though the movie has a few mildly funny moments and its three band-mate principals are cute as kittens, José is one of the emptiest films imaginable.

There's barely a whisker's worth of plot, and what does transpire is so shallow it's like watching a bunch of defanged, declawed folines try to get at the catnip inside a toy mouse. They'll but it around a bit, but they work accomplish much they won't accomplish much beyond coating the mouse in cat spit.

Adapted from the comic book and 1970s cartoon series, the movie stars Rachael Leigh Cook as determined singer-guitarist Josio, Rosario Dawson as brassy bass player Val and Tara Reid as ditzy drummer Melody.

bass player Val and Tara Reid activity drumer Melody.

Their band is stuck playing lowling alicys in their hometown of Riverdale until they're spotted by cunning record exec. Wyatt Frame (Alan Cumming), who needs a new group in a hurry. No matter that he's never heard them play — Wyatt signs the Pussyeats because all he needs are fresh faces to foist on the passive youth of America.

Under the guidance of label CEO Fiona (Parker Possy), the Pussyeats get a hasty makeover, are hurled into the studio and land their first single atop the record charts. Screaming teenagers chase them and declary Josie and the Pussyeats the best band ever.

"Does anyone think it's strange that all this happened in a wesk?" Josie asks.

Turns out the Pussyeats are

sumer zombies. Sincoze.

Josie and the Pussycats is colorful and busy with pretty images. But co-writers and directors Deborah Kaplan and Harry Elfont seem content to toss in a bit of music-video style and only trace elements of wit.

trace elements of wit.

The movie tries to spoof the marketing and packaging and force-feeding of music and merchandise. Only it does so on such little cat's feet that those buckers who do all that marketing and packaging come through without a scratch.

Good thing for the movie, too, since under the guise of lighthearted satire, Josic and the Pussycate is tuelf the worst sort of product-placement whore.

sumer zombies. Snooze.

Rosario are Melody, Josie and Val – better known to the Archie Comic world as "Josie and the Pussycats. The film is still purring in metro area theaters.

Cat Scratch Fever: Tara Reid, Rachael Leigh Cook and

There's barely a scene that isn't shilling for a soft drink or a brand of toothpaste or a music channel Web site. And of course the movic itselfis a long-form video promotingits soundtrack (now in stores,
and selling like hotcake, singuslar). Like the film, the songs are
pleasantly benign and thoroughly forgettable.

ly forgettable.

This was a questionable movie, project from the outset. Other, cartoons and comic-book adaptations such as The Flintstones, and X-men had sizable followings. While many people remember the Josée cartoons and comics fondly, it's doubtful anyone was hyperventilating in anticipation of a live-action version.