

Film's undecided theme still renders laughter



BY KEN DUSOLD
Staff Reviewer

Imagine Indiana Jones making a "fluffy" frittata. To some, it might sound disturbing — and it arguably is — but that does not stop it from being humorous at the same time. That statement fits "Morning Glory" perfectly.

Harrison Ford's performance as the pompous and curmudgeonly ex-evening news anchor, Mike Pomeroy, in this comedy written by Aline Brosh McKenna ("The Devil Wears Prada") is

refreshing, to say the least. The last time Ford tried comedy, we were left with "Hollywood Homicide," a movie that appropriately died at the box office. In his newest performance, Ford sheds just enough of his famous tough-guy persona to get laughs.

He is joined by Rachel McAdams, who stars as workaholic television executive producer Becky Fuller. Fuller, recently fired from her gig at a local morning show in New

Jersey, still qualifies for a job running the network morning program, "Daybreak," which is a national joke earning last place in the ratings. The fictional network, IBS, does not even have enough confidence in the show to budget it the amount required to fix broken doorknobs. An easy joke, director Roger Michell wisely plays the doorknob bit just subtly enough to make it a running gag, but not so many times as to annoy the audience.

Becky's job is — predictably — to boost ratings and save the show. Although there is closure, knowing whether she succeeds is not really the aim of the film. We could not care less. Rather, Michell focuses on Becky's transformations as she slowly comes to the realization that she cannot sacrifice her life for her

demanding job, Pomeroy as the determined anchor whose hardened exterior chips away to reveal a softer man with some emotion and the news industry as it loses its fight with sensational entertainment. "Morning Glory" attempts

to be part romantic comedy but fails miserably. Becky's love interest, the charming Adam (Patrick Wilson), is seen for any significant time in only a handful of scenes, and it is impossible to brush off the feeling that the two

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Photo courtesy of rottentomatoes.com

Top, Diane Keaton plays Colleen Peck, a superficially pleasant anchorwoman for "Daybreak," a ridiculous news program.

are together only for the sex. McAdams and Wilson have so little chemistry that in a scene in which he is supposed to be enamored with her while talking at a bar, his eyes say only "sex."

The time the film spends with Pomeroy is genuinely funny, particularly when he is opposite co-host Colleen Peck (Diane Keaton). Peck forces her way through each show with fake smiles and laughs, only to become a monster toward the staff and her arrogant associate. Unlike their younger counterparts, Ford

and Keaton have great chemistry. Scenes in which they volley insults back and forth are like something out of Saturday Night Live, as each one tries to top the other. In fact, the antics on the morning show itself earn the loudest laughs as we watch the pitifully lame weatherman thrown from an airplane, Peck attacked by a chipmunk during an animal segment and former President Jimmy Carter incorrectly labeled as a "sexual offender" during a news report.

The issue of modern news stands at the forefront of the

film's plot. Is journalistic news of yesteryear officially dead, as Becky declares when arguing with Pomeroy? Has pandering entertainment replaced integrity and principle? Michell seems to suggest that the answer to both questions is "yes," but he attempts no criticism.

"Morning Glory" is not a dark, satirical critique of modern news like "Network" or even a comedic review like "Broadcast News". The death of Walter Cronkite-esque news, according to this film, is a fact. There is no argument

here to suggest that we should fix this or that it is even wrong. It just is. Such a depressing underlying message is counterproductive for a movie trying so hard to be a lighthearted comedy.

If one can get past the film's indecision over what it is exactly, and take it as simply a cute comedy, then you should enjoy "Morning Glory." And if you still are unsure about whether or not you want to see the film, just imagine Indiana Jones cooking a frittata and then decide.

Coloring Outside the Lines

Question your next move

'Real World' threatens oblige questions of the next step

BY MEG BURIK
Columnist

As the holidays draw near, I steel myself for the impending waterfall of "future" questions from relatives. "Are you still planning on going to law school?" "How will that English degree work out

for you in this economy?" "Are you ready for the real world?" This season, I feel a rush of defiance and strange security, because I can honestly say, "I don't know." I have no idea what I'm going to do with my life. But really, does anyone?

This transitory time of the final years of college, or the first years in the amorphous and falsely named "real world," offer many scary possibilities. My current attitude toward the ominous "next step" is to reevaluate my passions.

The exploration of "what you want to be when you grow up" is something kids do from preschool onward. I remember dressing up differently every "career" day in elementary school. One year I wanted to be a doctor. The next year, I wore a dry suit to school and said I was a marine biologist. The next year (when the Kansas City Chiefs were doing well), I carried around a microphone and pretended to be a sports announcer. I'm sure you all went through a similar experience.

Now, I hesitate to take the next step after college, because I still don't know what I want to be when I grow up. What is a "grown up" anyway? Someone who works to pay their bills? Someone with a mortgage and a marriage? I'm trying to preempt my mid-life crisis, making choices now that don't lead to a "real world" future that is a bad fit for me. And what is the real world? The one that runs nine to five with a paycheck every two weeks? Have the last 22 years of my life been a hologram?

Some would say that this semi-

stagnant questioning is immature. But it might be what is best for me, and possibly you too.

Because, on the other hand, is it mature just to follow the next step blindly? Navigate the next road on the map of life someone drew out for you (be it parents, professors or society)? I feel like I'm driving past the exit sign on the college highway with my fingers in my ears, eyes closed, shouting "La-la-la! I don't see you!" But I still know what the exit sign says: "Exit Truman, and don't forget Truman grads are very successful!" Then I will get off at

the exit and face the next sign with those left and right pointing arrows: "Graduate school, law school — turn left and drive at least two years. Successful career — turn right for at least five years." Shaken up about this impending exit and the future choices that didn't seem to match with me, I sought advice from my academic adviser. She said, "This is the time in your life for you to join the Peace Corps or go to Brazil! It's time to get out and see the world." Perhaps I will take this turn.

In an opinion column by William Deresiewicz in *The Chronicle*, a publication that covers higher education topics, Deresiewicz argues for true innovation in your life path in a column adapted from a speech he gave to the freshman class at Stanford University. He discusses a concept he calls "Moral Imagination," which he describes as envisioning new ways to live your life.

"It means figuring out what you want for yourself, not what your parents want, or your peers want, or your school wants, or your society wants," Deresiewicz wrote. "Originating your own values. Thinking your way toward your own definition of success."

I don't know if I am up for the Deresiewicz challenge. But maybe you are, maybe I am. There is something very comforting in having a sound next step, one that comes from "getting in" to whatever is next, be it a job or additional education. Or maybe next year you will find yourself living in an eco-village learning a sustainable lifestyle. Maybe next year you will do freelance copy editing while working on a novel. Maybe next year you will take that step to start a career and work up a corporate ladder.

Whatever step you decide to take after college, just don't forget to question it.

Is it mature to just blindly follow the next step? Navigate the next road on the map of life someone drew out for you?



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