

Roses is black comedy

Entertainment

By DIAHANN NADEAU
Herald Special

AT THE MOVIES

The War of the Roses is a flawed but disturbing black comedy about divorce and the folly of materialism. Danny DeVito directed this dark scenario of a well-off couple who are both determined to hold on to their beautiful house and all the treasures within. Unfortunately, the touches of tragedy are a little heavy and this film isn't always sure what it wants to be - comedy or drama.

Barbara (Kathleen Turner) and Oliver (Michael Douglas) are a couple who have it all: two children, a cat, a dog, a housekeeper, and a truly gorgeous house. Money is not a problem, the kids are going to Harvard, everyone is healthy. However, things start to fall apart as Barbara has a mid-life crisis and wants to be free of Oliver. Poor Oliver just doesn't know what has hit him.

Instead of giving up and going on with his life, Oliver digs in, refuses to give up the house, and the two end up living in their own sections. Then all hell breaks loose. One deed leads to another, until the house becomes a war zone and nothing is sacred or safe. The battle ends tragically and the audience is left, stunned and silent, worn out from the emotional and physical violence of the film's last hour.

DeVito plays Gavin, Oliver's partner and his lawyer. Gavin tells the story in flashbacks; he wants to caution a client about the horrors of divorce, and this is a cautionary tale if ever there was one.

Douglas is perfectly cast as the ambitious, preoccupied-but-loving husband, who loves his wife come hell or high water. Turner is good as the unloving Barbara (although the camera seems to dwell endless-

ly on her breasts), and DeVito is fine as the narrator. Marianne Sagebrecht is the confused housekeeper who is caught in the middle.

This is a harrowing comedy, dark in vision, with generally un-sympathetic characters, which does not help. It is a salutary look at marriage, depicted here as an isolating union, where couples grow apart and come to loathe the false intimacy that occurs. It is only through the closeness that marriage brings that such hate and vengeance can breed.

The humor is often ironic and sometimes frightening, and the movie seems a little long, but on the whole The War of the Roses is worth watching. Couples should see it together, and if any of us are unfortunate enough to go through divorce let us remember to be kind. You wouldn't want to end up like the Roses, would you?

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