Diner, Rated R. Directed and written by Barry Levinson. Starring Steve Guttenberg and Daniel Stern.

There has been welcome trend in film of late. Hollywood has been making realistic films about ordinary people. The success of Robert Redford's Ordinary People attests to how well these films have been received. There was The Four Seasons, The Great Santini, and the lesser known Return of the Secaucus Seven. Now this is Diner.

Diner is an intelligent film. It has a familiar theme—the evolution from young man to adult. It has a familiar setting—the late 1950's—such will do double duty in comparisons with American Graffiti. But Diner is special. It deals thoughtfully with its subject, but not too seriously, so that it can still be classified as a "comedy-drama." The background of Diner gives a flavor for what the film is about. Writer-director Barry Levinson, who makes his directing debut with this film, wrote the script at the suggestion of comedian Mel Brooks. Levinson's directing debut with this film, wrote the script at the suggestion of comedian Mel Brooks after Levinson had been chatting to Brooks about stories dealing with the people he had grown up with in Baltimore. Five relatively unknown actors were chosen for the leading roles. The film deals with this gang of closely knit friends and the sometimes humorous, sometimes trying times they face. It seems at the beginning that Diner might be another of those generic '50's films about cruising and tying together policemen's shoelaces for kicks. For example, one of the five close friends, Boogie (Mickey Rourke), takes bets that he can make it with a girl on a first date, while his friends watch to be sure they're not cheated—not promising material in itself. But Diner isn't merely about the cliche antics of "Happy Days" life; it is about the change into adulthood. Later in the movie, when Boogie makes a similar bet, we expect the same tired humor to be attempted, but Levinson shows us a twist—and we no longer see Boogie as a mindless comic figure, but as a human being who is confronted with new decisions which he is now able to cope with. Mickey Rourke's glib style at the film's beginning makes his transition into adulthood all the more beautiful.

It is this unique blend of humor and seriousness which makes Diner worth seeing. Eddie (Steve Guttenberg), another of the central five, presents this formula in dealing with another of the film's issues—marriage. Eddie has a fiancé he's not sure he wants to marry. His fiancé gives a speech extolling how marriage is special. It deals thoughtfully with the responsibilities one faces in adulthood. But with the realization that "there is always the relief of each other company. There is comfort in the sometimes humorous, sometimes trying times they face. It seems at the beginning that Diner might be another of those generic '50's films about cruising and tying together policemen's shoelaces for kicks. For example, one of the five close friends, Boogie (Mickey Rourke), takes bets that he can make it with a girl on a first date, while his friends watch to be sure they're not cheated—not promising material in itself. But Diner isn't merely about the cliche antics of "Happy Days" life; it is about the change into adulthood. Later in the movie, when Boogie makes a similar bet, we expect the same tired humor to be attempted, but Levinson shows us a twist—and we no longer see Boogie as a mindless comic figure, but as a human being who is confronted with new decisions which he is now able to cope with. Mickey Rourke's glib style at the film's beginning makes his transition into adulthood all the more beautiful.

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