Fatal Attraction fails to explore consequences of adultery

By RICARDO RODRIGUEZ

DAN, HAPPILY MARRIED MALE lawyer, meets Alex, single, successful, female publishing executive. Two days in bed follow...

Such is the basis for the drama-thriller Fatal Attraction. This film aspires to explore the severe repercussions that may result from seemingly "harmless" adultery. Appropriately, the two-night-stand occurs when Dan's wife and child are away viewing a prospective home in the country.

When it comes time for Dan's life to return to normalcy, Alex (Glenn Close) insists they continue to see each other, making Dan (Michael Douglas) extremely uneasy — as far as he's concerned the experience between Alex and he was a fling, uneasy - as far as he's concerned the ex-GF has just ideas of emotional impact of adultery, the movie begins to torment Dan and his family. Invitably, Dan must tell his wife what happened. And to make matters worse, Alex is pregnant and wishes to have the child.

If Fatal Attraction had clung to the subject of emotional impact of adultery, the film could have offered new insights. But as the title suggests, emotions are not the only things violated. Alex becomes increasingly crazy as the film progresses: at first it is only something eerie — maybe the way she dresses or the look in her eye. But as the story unwinds, Alex becomes a raging ghoul who would scare any Living Dead. When Beth does finally learn about the affair, and the baby, it is she for whom everyone cheers. During much of the film, Beth is completely unaware of Dan's affair, and the resulting ironies are heart wrenching. When Beth does finally learn about the affair, the audience's compassion is for her and not for Dan — the male - as it many times is in other films. Beth's outrage is welcome and justified — it is an exhibit of her strength.

The fact that Alex Forrest is a very good looking, almost flirtatious, woman helps one to ask, "Was this affair really worth it?" But Alex's character receives much less attention that it deserves: the pain and suffering of finding out about her husband is lost in the movie's climax. A recurring theme of the film is the allure of the infamous "Jason." As actors, Douglas and Close do their very best, almost as if they know the plot needs extra support. Particularly notable is Anne Archer, who plays Dan's wife, Beth. She is the strongest and most realistic character in the movie, and ultimately it is she for whom everyone cheers. During much of the film, Beth is completely unaware of Dan's affair, and the resulting ironies are heart wrenching. When Beth does finally learn about the affair, the audience's compassion is for her and not for Dan — the male - as it many times is in other films. Beth's outrage is welcome and justified — it is an exhibit of her strength.

So if you liked Halloween or Friday the 13th, this movie might interest you, especially the last half. But if you're expecting a drama investigating the consequences of adultery, you'd better leave your slippers on.

Michael Douglas and Glenn Close in Fatal Attraction.

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