Disclosure offers twist on sexual harassment case

DISCLOSURE

By Kamal Swamidoss

Disclosure is surprisingly entertaining. I expected the story to exploit an "intriguing" twist. A man is sexually harassed by a woman and he decides to stand up and fight for himself (and, ostensibly, for men everywhere). I thought it would be relatively predictable and not especially interesting, but Disclosure is entertaining from beginning to end because it keeps the audience guessing and the main actors give fine performances.

The film spans one week in the life of Tom Sanders, played by Michael Douglas. It takes place in a computer company in Seattle.

On Monday morning, Sanders finds out that one of his ex-girlfriends, Meredith Johnson, has the promotion he was expecting. She seduces him in her office that night, and they spend much of the week at odds with one another after she brings sexual harassment charges against him the next day.

The film visits familiar scenarios, but they're treated in unexpected ways. For example, Sanders’ wife (Caroline Goodall) finds out about what happened on Monday night, but her immediate reaction to the incident isn’t predictable at all. Even the simple subversion of gender roles in the harassment case give rise to one of the best parts of the film — the interaction between Demi Moore and Michael Douglas. There aren't many scenes with the two of them, but each one is a treat to watch. You can feel the hate between them.

Behind this story progress two other events: their company's merger with another company, and mysterious problems with a revolutionary CD-ROM-based virtual reality system they're trying to manufacture.

With the sexual harassment story line (which leads Sanders into a realm of sinister corporate politics), there is a lot of material to cover in two hours, but everything is detailed thoroughly and nothing integral to the plot is masked.

Sanders is one of the nicest characters that Douglas has played. He convincingly depicts the loving husband and father. Can I just say, before beginning, you really want him to win.

On the other hand, you really want Demi Moore to fall off the earth. She plays the villain very well. Donald Sutherland and comedi- ans Dennis Miller are also in the film. Sutherland is the president of the company, and Miller is the hardware guy on Douglas' design team. Neither one plays a big part in the story.

This film is adapted from Michael Crichton’s novel. Not surprisingly, the computer plot is a big part of the film. It's treated like a mystery, which we see from Sanders’ perspective. It's interesting, but at times the film tries to make the computer story line a little too exciting. There’s a limit to how suspense- ful and dramatic file-deletion can be, and Disclosure tries to go beyond this limit.

Something else to be expected from Crichton: social commentary by the characters. This film is no exception. It seems everyone has a speech about society, as a representative of his/her gender, employment status, or age group. Everyone, that is, except Douglas. He's only trying to get out of a difficult situation.

Disclosure has a lot of interesting scenes that develop its conflict. The movie’s director, Barry Levinson (Rain Man, Margin Call) considers this film a minor comeback after a couple of dismal outings at the box office (Trevors and Jimmy Hollywood).

Demi Moore and Sanders give fine performances, especially in their scenes together. The film manages to be highly entertaining while it gives the audience a mayhem scene on some dangerous positions in sex and business.

Michael Douglas and Demi Moore star as ex-lovers and corporate adversaries in Disclosure, adapted from Michael Crichton’s best-selling novel.