

'Crazy People' is patronizing and exploitive

NEW YORK (CNS) — Although its unfortunate title should rightfully offend those fighting to improve the media image of mentally ill individuals, "Crazy People" (Paramount) is by turns a predictable satire and comic fairy tale about the nature of societal craziness and the dishonesty of Madison Avenue ad mavens.

Emory Leeson's sudden honest ad campaigns and appeal for truth in advertising are considered a clear indication of his corporate crack-up. Burned out by the lies and deception promoted by his employer, Emory is swiftly shipped off to a bucolic sanitarium for rest and relaxation.

Emory (Dudley Moore) is a lost soul. Disgusted with his work as an ad executive, he has a hard time blending in with fellow patients, whose emotional problems have assured them a long-term commitment to the sanitarium lifestyle and a place in the Three Stooges Hall of Fame. When a sweet, vulnerable patient named Kathy (Daryl Hannah) takes Emory to her heart, he begins to empathize with his new afflicted pals.

Emory realizes that he's been right all along — that his boss and groveling co-workers are life's real crazies — and he aims to chuck the rat race for good.

But his story boards mistakenly make their way through production channels to high-visibility slots on billboards and national magazines, and Emory's honest campaigns create a sensation. His slimy boss, Drucker (J.T. Walsh), takes instant credit for the campaigns and sets up shop at the sanitarium, putting Emory and his new sidekicks to work on a new batch of "honest" ads.

Once again, Emory must deflect the



Dudley Moore (left) and Daryl Hannah star as Emory Leeson and Kathy Burgess in the comedy "Crazy People." Leeson is an ad agency executive who wants to have truth in advertising. This strategy is considered insane by his co-workers, who commit him to a sanitarium. He then enlists his fellow patients to be his new creative colleagues.

despicable, dishonest user mentality that sent him to the sanitarium in the first place. He has to work fast to save his sanity and to stop the exploitation of his fragile fellow patients, who flourish under his creative thumb.

"Crazy People" begins as a light satire, joshing corporate America, the advertising con game and executive burnout. It works on a much less cerebral level than the recent sharp-edged British satire, "How to Get Ahead in Advertising."

"Crazy People" then turns into a

lighthearted, comic version of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," where we meet and swiftly come to love some wacky, lovable mental patients. The film climaxes with a teary, fairy-tale rescue and escape that dilutes the satiric edge of the premise.

Director Tony Bill ("My Bodyguard") obviously has affection for the film's comic inmates and disaffection for the sleazy corporate giants who sell us everything from cars to TV sets. Actually one long commercial for numerous well-known products, the film also sells mental illness

with the patronizing "Dream Team" approach: It's fun, it's funny and it's freaky!

While "Crazy People" is essentially a heartwarming tale of good guys winning out over bad guys, on its most basic level it's just another case of deceptive advertising and mass media exploitation.

Due to some profanity laced with vulgarities and numerous sexual references, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

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