

'Edward' is 'shear' fun; sequel disappoints

NEW YORK (CNS) — A wistful fairy tale, "Edward Scissorhands" (20th Century Fox) follows the trials and tribulations of a title character who looks like a refugee from a horror film.

Alone and sad in a mansion sits Edward (Johnny Depp), left unfinished and sporting grotesque blades where he should have hands after his creator (Vincent Price) meets an untimely death.

Peg, the local Avon lady (Dianne Wiest), discovers him and welcomes him into her family. His natural shearing talents — both for canine haircutting and creating fabulous lawn sculptures — turn him into a local hero. Alas the innocent humanoid is smitten by the daughter of his adopted family, Kim (Winona Ryder), which incurs the wrath of her boyfriend (Anthony Michael Hall), preventing them all from living happily ever after in their pastel suburb.

"Edward Scissorhands" is a simple story sweetly told. Depp as Edward is a gentle, unassuming creature who — after being forced into a violent confrontation — accepts his fate without question.

The animation background of director Tim Burton ("Batman," "Beetlejuice") is readily apparent. The characters are cartoonish, easily recognizable stereotypes. Wiest's Avon lady is a hoot while Alan Arkin as her husband seems to look to Donna Reed's TV husband as a role model.

The color and design in the movie are similarly unrealistic — a pleasing palette of soft blues and mint greens. The costumes are whimsical, candy-colored confections in a movie where small visual details are given more weight than character development. Thus Ryder's Kim is just a pretty face and her boyfriend a meanie from word one.

With its thin story line "Edward Scissorhands" emerges as a fanciful but finally flimsy film.

Due to some brief stylized violence and momentary sexual innuendo, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

'The Grifters'

Greed and lust prove to be the prime motivators for the characters in "The Grifters" (Miramax), a dark tale of three con artists mired in a deadly triangle.

Lilly (Anjelica Huston) works for mobster Bobo (Pat Hingle) lowering odds at races, and is dangerously skimming bet money for herself. Sent to Los Angeles, she looks up her son Roy (John Cusack), from whom she's been estranged, in hopes of a reconciliation. Immediately, she takes a dislike to his scheming lover Myra (An-



Zade Rosenthal-20th Century Fox
Kindly Avon Lady Peg Boggs (Dianne Wiest) comes upon samples of the hero's handiwork in 20th Century Fox's "Edward Scissorhands."

nette Bening). Roy's a small-time grifter, or petty swindler, who's being pressured by Myra to join her and go for the big score.

The two women become bitter rivals for Roy's affections, but like them he trusts no one and is looking out only for himself. Myra discovers where Lilly stashes the mob money, rats on her to Bobo and makes a play for the cash before the mob finds Lilly.

The threesome's mutual manipulations backfire badly in the end, sending them individually to destinies they would never have anticipated.

Jim Thompson's seedy novel goes the full route from evil to annihilation in director Stephen Frears' gritty film.

Billed as a comedy thriller, darkly funny elements are rarely present and any thrills are strictly cheap shots.

The characters' attitudes, more than the events that engulf them, are the focus, but since no characters ever change, the film is stagnant. More troublesome is their portrayal as people without a choice to be decent or law-abiding — they just can't help opting for deceit, greed and betrayal at every opportunity.

"The Grifters" takes a long-winded and occasionally illogical look at hardened, unappealing characters you wouldn't want to spend two hours with.

Because of intermittent intense violence, casual promiscuity with nudity and minimal rough language, the USCC classification is O — morally offensive. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.

'Three Men and a Lady'

The bachelors are back in "Three Men and a Little Lady" (Touchstone) but in danger of losing their tiny tot to a miscast marriage.

Baby Mary (Robin Weisman) is now 5 and living with her actress mom, Sylvia (Nancy Travis), and her three "daddies" — Peter (Tom Selleck), her biological father, Jack (Ted Danson), and Michael (Steve Guttenberg).

Peter has fallen in love with Sylvia but can't find the words to tell her and fears jeopardizing the delicate balance and

platonic harmony of the group's unorthodox living arrangements.

When Sylvia concludes that Peter is not interested in her, she accepts the proposal of her officious director (Christopher Cazenove) to marry and move back to England.

The guys are crushed at the prospect of losing their two favorite roommates but recognize there's more than a little truth to Sylvia's contention that they all have been using the situation to avoid committing to other relationships and getting on with their individual lives.

Once Sylvia and Mary arrive in England for the wedding preparations the threesome decide Sylvia's stuffy fiance will be a bum dad and they're off and running to stop the ceremony or at least put the right man by the bride.

Typical of most sequels, "Three Men and a Little Lady" does not measure up to 1987 mega-hit "Three Men and a Baby." Nonetheless, director Emile Ardolino offers a modestly appealing picture that tries to combine screwball comedy with old-fashioned romance.

The movie skips along at a sprightly pace, punctuated by oddball British types like the peculiar butler and the voracious vicar. All this lends a mildly farcical air to the proceedings, but as the outcome is entirely predictable "Three Men and a Little Lady" may not completely charm discerning viewers.

Due to very mild sexual innuendo, the USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The MPAA rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

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