

Disappointing comedy, murky melodrama miss mark

By Gerri Pare

Catholic New Service

NEW YORK — A risqué soap opera starts looking tame compared to the personal lives of the cast and crew in *Soapdish* (Paramount).

At the center of long-running soap "The Sun Also Sets" is 42-year-old Celeste (Sally Field), who is trying to hang on against increasingly younger and meaner competition. Rival Montana (Cathy Moriarty) has persuaded producer David (Robert Downey Jr.) that he can make a home run with her if he downplays Celeste by rehiring Jeffrey (Kevin Kline), fired by Celeste 20 years ago.

The unforgiving Jeffrey, long relegated to second-rate dinner theaters, leaps at the chance to upstage his former flame, Celeste. An even sweeter revenge presents itself in the fetching form of Lori (Elisabeth Shue). Celeste's nubile niece who has a small role in the cast but a big role in Celeste's otherwise lonely life.

Almost unhinged at the thought of Jeffrey kissing Lori, Celeste blurts out — on camera in the middle of the soap — that Lori is actually her daughter and Jeffrey is Lori's father. The massive publicity skyrockets the ratings, and Montana tries to



Bruce W. Talmon
Sally Field and Kevin Kline star in the comedy *Soapdish*.

cash in with a bogus claim that she is also carrying Jeffrey's child.

Little is sacred in director Michael Hoffman's snappy comedy spoof. Greedy TV executives, actors' self-obsessions, desperate ingenues and inane celebrity adulation all surface for jabs, often delivered

by a crisply dry Whoopi Goldberg, who plays the knowing scriptwriter.

Because of frequent bawdy sexual innuendo and minimal rough language, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. 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 Miracle'

The arrival of an elusive U.S. actress in the Irish seaside town of Bray causes an emotional confrontation between a father and son in "The Miracle" (Miramax).

The home life of 15-year-old Jimmy (Niall Byrne) is a joyless affair — no mother or siblings and a hard-drinking musician dad (Donal McCann), who makes him play in his second-rate band at night.

More interesting are Jimmy's days, spent with his friend Rose (Lorraine Pilkington) making up romantic tales about visitors to the coastal resort community.

Jimmy becomes fascinated by one of them, a mysterious American (Beverly D'Angelo) he discovers starring in a local production of "Destry Rides Again." He

approaches her and gets mixed signals as she both encourages him and yet shrinks from his tentative flirtations.

His dad is much clearer — he tells him never to speak to her again but won't say why. Eventually, however, the father is forced to open old wounds and confront an ugly triangle when the woman is revealed to be Jimmy's mother.

Irish-born writer-director Neil Jordan's murky melodrama is of more interest for its background bits of business — an old man and woman who longingly pass each other every day on the boardwalk, an acrobat who practices archery with her toes and a whimsical wandering menagerie.

The two teens (Byrne and Pilkington), newcomers to acting, are naturals in their debuts. Unfortunately, Rose acts on her bizarre imaginations and is shown briefly having sex with a young elephant trainer in hopes of "humanizing" him — one more unnecessary scene in a pretty pointless picture that only toys with the specter of incest without ever coming to grips with it.

Due to a brief sexual encounter, occasional rough language and minor violence, the USCC classification is A-III — adults. Not rated by the MPA.

Dining Around the Diocese

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