

Hokey characters, obvious plot doom Doc

By Geri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — Michael J. Fox stars in *Doc Hollywood* (Warner Bros.), as an ambitious doctor headed for a big-bucks career in Beverly Hills when he gets stranded in a small southern town.

Striking across country in his vintage Porsche, Dr. Ben Stone (Fox) runs into a picket fence in Grady, S.C. For his crime, town judge (Roberts Blossom) sentences Ben to several days of community service. The colorful inhabitants welcome Ben with open arms and urge him to stay, since their only doctor (Barnard Hughes) is on his last legs.

But the only thing keeping Stone in this one-horse town — besides his smashed-up car stuck in the town's one garage and the judge's order that he work in the one-nurse hospital — is his attraction to Grady's ambulance driver, Lou (Julie Warner).

Yet after a single week of country doctoring, Stone hears the call of the good life in Beverly Hills. When he gets there, however, he realizes he left the good life behind in small-town Americana.

There's no getting beyond *Doc Hollywood's* predictable plot and contrived characterizations. The outcome is obvious



Dr. Benjamin Stone (Michael J. Fox) falls in love with an unconventional woman named Lou (Julie Warner) while he's stranded in a small Southern town in the romantic comedy *Doc Hollywood*.

from the moment the money-hungry doctor gets waylaid in the tiny town.

The camera catches the Norman Rockwell look of the place, but nearly all of the characters emerge as overdone stereotypes. Among them are David Ogden Stiers ("M*A*S*H") as the world's friendliest mayor and Woody Harrelson ("Cheers") as Lou's hokey, dimwitted suitor. Only slightly more palatable are Hughes as the ornery old doc, and a crusty Frances Sternhagen as the town waitress.

Fox doesn't get the opportunity for much physical comedy, and his romantic pairing with Warner is uninspired.

Even so, the film would be acceptable for youngsters but for two unnecessary scenes. In one, Ben fantasizes about nude California beach bunnies. In the other, Lou displays herself naked before him.

The film's message — that it's better to practice family medicine on real people than to pursue the almighty buck doing nips and tucks on the rich and famous — is well-taken. It's just too bad viewers are fed so much corn en route.

Due to slight vulgar language and frontal nudity, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

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