

Dublin 'soul' forms heart of 'Commitments'

By Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — "Aren't we a little white for this?" asks a skeptical Dublin lad when told his band will play strictly soul music in the spirited movie, *The Commitments* (20th Century Fox).

Jimmy (Robert Arkins) is a young man with a dream: to forge a first-rate band that will bring back blue-collar, '60s Motown sound to economically depressed Dublin. ("We would be working-class if there was work," his friend glumly observes.)

After running an ad to audition band members in his overcrowded home — where his father has positioned Elvis' photo above the pope's portrait — a motley crew of hopefuls arrives.

Eventually Jimmy assembles nine kids with raw talent and one older trumpeter, Joey "The Lips" (Johnny Murphy), who claims to have jammed with every rock great imaginable. Joey's a natural teacher, spurring them on as they rehearse but also alienating the envious young lads by romancing the band's three female singers (Maria Doyle, Angeline Ball and Bronagh Gallagher).

Then, just as their combined talent is making "the saviors of soul," as they are billed, a local sensation, manager Jimmy has his hands full keeping the backstage infighting down to a roar.

Proving how elusive fame is, everything comes to a head at their first paying gig with a record deal for the taking and a promised personal appearance from soul icon Wilson Pickett.

Vibrant and sometimes shrill, this gritty movie from British director Alan Parker throbs with music, energy and belief in individual potential.

Immediately off-putting is the band's constant gutter language, but they use four-letter words as automatic adjectives rather than as angry obscenities.

Parker elicits some exceptional performances in a movie that in itself is unusual.



David Appleby-Twentieth Century Fox
Andrew Strong (center) plays Deco in Alan Parker's new film, *The Commitments*. Other cast members (background, left to right) are Maria Doyle as Natalie, Kenneth McClusky as Derek and Glen Hansard as Outspan.

This is because there are virtually no actors — they are real kids singing their hearts out live — giving the two dozen musical numbers a special wild spirit and emotional intensity.

What radiates from this movie is hope — despite the band's ultimate failure. The message is that no matter how bleak the surroundings, you can try to make something of yourself.

Surprisingly, the movie, based on Roddy Doyle's novel of the same name, nicely fleshes out many of the dozen main characters, including a sympathetic young priest, with a quirky wit that makes the jealousies less annoying. The kids really bring together their community, performing at an anti-drug benefit under the amusingly misspelled banner that warns "Heroin

Kills." Overkill diminishes the final scenes, as if the director fell in love with his own work and couldn't bear to let the editor trim the redundant music and screaming scenes. With such a simple story, hammering home the kids' bickering and repeating the same song undercuts its basic power.

The performance of 16-year-old Andrew Strong lives up to his name, as he portrays the fiery lead singer with grit and passion rare in one so young. The lead, Arkins, is a natural too, and professional actor Murphy doesn't disappoint as the spiritually inclined but womanizing trumpeter.

The three female characters are less successfully realized. They gripe at being marketed as sex objects in their slinky spandex but love every minute of it and all fall victim to Joey "The Lips."

Because of much rough language, intermittent sexual innuendo and minimal violence, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

'Mobsters'

Substituting firepower for originality, *Mobsters* (Universal) details the bloody rise to power between 1917 and 1931 of supposed pals Lucky Luciano, Meyer Lansky, Bugsy Siegel and Frank Costello (Christian Slater, Patrick Dempsey, Richard Grieco and Costas Mandylor, re-

but rival mob bosses: Don Masseria (Anthony Quinn) and Don Faranzano (Michael Spectively).

The two Italian and two Jewish thugs join forces to make a fortune distributing bootleg whiskey for Arnold Rothstein (F. Murray Abraham). Their prosperity catches the eyes of New York's two reigning Gambons, and from that point on it's a bloodfest.

First-time feature director Michael Karbelnikoff seems intent on capturing the youth audience by glamorizing the four gutsy "heroes" with money, power, show-girls and the lure of danger. No matter that they relish killing, they justify it in the name of their friendship. Crime does pay seems to be the message as the end crawl indicates that three of the four went on to live very prosperous lives.

From the hackneyed opening scene, the movie is a mostly formula rehash of better-made gangster flicks of yesteryear.

Once you look beyond the stylish cinematography and handsome production design, the movie exploits the violent natures of its characters and continually trivializes human life. That's what's almost criminal about *Mobsters*.

Because of excessive violence, uncritical portrayal of killers, much rough language, a restrained bedroom scene and occasional nudity, the USCC classification is O — morally offensive. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.

WIN A FREE ALBUM OR TAPE

THIS WEEK'S QUESTION:
Crissy Hynde is the lead singer of what famous rock band?

ANSWER: _____

Name: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
School: _____

WORLD'S LARGEST MUSIC STORE
HOUSE OF GUITARS

Over 4 million tapes, CDs and albums.
Try them for that song you can't find.
Most New Album and Tape Releases Just \$6.98

MUSIC TRIVIA
LARGEST SELECTIONS OF
CD's From \$3.98 to \$11.98
645 TITUS AVE.

Rules: Each week, one correct entry will be selected at random to receive a gift certificate for a free album or tape of the recipient's choice from the House of Guitars.

1000 OF VIDEOS, CONCERT T-SHIRTS

6 FLOORS OF NEW AND USED MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

WINNER: Saran Lynch of St. Ann's in Hornell correctly identified Trevor Rabin and Steve Howe as the 2 guitarists for the band Yes.

Mail Entries to:
Catholic Trivia
1150 Buffalo Rd.
Rochester, NY
14624

Vell, Hello again! I haven't seen you in a spell, I presume you sleep at midnight to rest up for Halloween shopping ... Witches why I am appearing in this ridiculous ad in the middle of the day ...

By da vay ... New stock is arriving every day. I'll keep you posted. Now I go back to bed. Goodnight.

KING SALES/COURT JESTER
"The Complete Halloween Store"

46 Sagar Drive • 442-8922
Off Culver between East & University behind Empire Electric

★ ★ ★ ★ **MOVIE TRIVIA** ★ ★ ★ ★

WIN ONE YEAR OF VIDEO RENTALS FROM

Wegmans HOME VIDEO

Question: What actress starred in both movies, *The Year of Living Dangerously* and *Ghost Busters*?

Answer: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Rules: ALL ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY MIDNIGHT, OCTOBER 14th. Random drawing of correct entries to be held October 15th by Catholic Courier Representatives. Entries must be returned by mail to: Catholic Courier, Movie Trivia, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, NY 14624-1899. Winner will be notified by mail. Prize is one year of Wegmans Video Rentals (membership is free and is required). Prize is not exchangeable for cash or other merchandise.

Last Month's Winner: Paula Krawezak of Rochester correctly identified William Hurt as the actor who starred in *The Big Chill* and *Children of a Lesser God*.