

Comedies go overboard, but still worth seeing

By Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — When *Honey, I Shrank the Kids* struck a chord with audiences in 1989, it was a safe bet Disney would have Dad tinkering with the tots again. Sure enough, now his lament is *Honey, I Blew Up the Kid*.

Two-year-old Adam (played by twins Daniel and Joshua Shalikar) spurts to 7 feet after being accidentally exposed to Dad's latest experimental invention.

By the time the giant tyke heads for the bright lights of nearby Las Vegas, he's 112 feet high and has tucked his teenage brother and baby sitter (Robert Oliveri and Keri Russell) into his pocket as "toys."

It's up to Mom and Dad (Marcia Strassman and Rick Moranis) to bring the big baby down to size before the gamblers are flat and not just flat broke.

Director Randal Kleiser milks the one-joke premise for all it's worth in spite of the fact that a 2-year-old can't really take direction and has a limited vocabulary.

The mild-mannered comedy is filled with amusing special effects of the towering tot as a gentle giant unaware of his own destructive power or of the danger facing the two kids dangling from his pocket.

Moranis and Strassman dependably repeat their roles of the wacky, resourceful parents who must rescue the kids. Oliveri and Russell are wholesomely appealing as the two kids on board the boisterous baby.

The outcome is, of course, totally predictable, but the trip is still apt to have viewers smiling and the movie



Richard Foreman-Walt Disney Company
Three years after inadvertently shrinking and then un-shrinking his children in *Honey, I Shrank the Kids*, scientist Wayne Szallinski (Rick Moranis, center) and company (Marcia Strassman, left and Lloyd Bridges, right) have the reverse problem in *Honey, I Blew Up the Kid*. Szallinski accidentally douses his youngest with a particle beam from his latest experiment: an electromagnetic ray that expands molecules to the nth degree.

has the good sense to end just before it overdoses on cuteness.

Because of comic treatment of the destruction and menace caused by the giant child, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

Death Becomes Her

Goldie Hawn and Meryl Streep duke it out over a plastic surgeon they desperately need in *Death Becomes Her* (Universal).

Back in the 1970s, mousy Helen (Hawn) went over the edge after glamorous actress Madeline (Streep)

stole her fiance, plastic surgeon Dr. Ernest Menville (Bruce Willis).

A quarter-century later, Helen is a gorgeous beauty author while musty Madeline and drunken Dr. Menville are miserable together in Beverly Hills. Helen persuades the doctor to murder Madeline so they can start anew.

Before he does, however, Madeline downs a magic potion that restores her former beauty and makes her immortal — so her death is, shall we say, short-lived.

Madeline murders Helen in retaliation, but she, too, instantly revives, thanks to the same witches brew. They still, however, need their favorite plastic surgeon for daily touch-ups.

What's going on here, wonders the dazed doctor, as well might you, since the movie gets wilder and crazier from that point forward.

The first third of director Robert Zemeckis' black comedy is a hoot. Streep is the perfect parody of the neurotic star, madly in love with herself, and proving it rightly in a Broadway musical vanity production. Throughout, her performance runs rings around her co-stars. As she withers away in Beverly Hills, one can almost sympathize with her; barely contained desperation to preserve her youth and beauty.

Initially, Hawn is also laughable, as she balloons to 300 pounds after losing the doctor and spends her days in front of the VCR — watching Madeline being killed in a movie over and over while planning a similar real-life fate for her.

The satirical edge gets blunted, however, once the romantic rivals kill each other, only to discover they are both zombies still stuck with each other when their uncooperative plastic surgeon bolts. After that it's just another dopey, special-effects movie with a mean streak that is forced and not particularly funny.

Though it goes overboard and eventually drowns, at least it mocks the folly of pursuing eternal youth at all costs. The huge baby-boomer population, now settling into middle age, might find its satire has some sting.

Due to cartoon-like violence treated comically, some sexual references and a flash of nudity, the USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

Book offers insightful facts on Catholic higher education

Visions and Values in Catholic Higher Education, by Vincentian Father J. Patrick Murphy, Sheed & Ward (Kansas City, Mo., 1991); 234 pages; \$14.95.

By William Droel
Catholic News Service

What's Catholic about Catholic colleges? Vincentian Father J. Patrick Murphy in *Visions and Values in Catholic Higher Education* sets out to answer a question that's being asked in the Vatican, in college board rooms and over kitchen tables as parents struggle to help their children pay tuition at a Catholic college.

What's Catholic about these schools is not the faculty's religious affiliation. Of course, in this day and age, the majority of faculty could not possibly be priests or religious. In fact — and here's a shocker — "only two Vincentians teach at DePaul University, both

new to the classroom in the past three years."

Furthermore, Father Murphy's study finds that only 45 percent of the faculty at Catholic colleges call themselves Catholic and his report carries no "implication" of "how active" in their faith respondents might be. Nearly 15 percent of the faculty are neither Catholic nor Protestant and a full 15 percent have no religious affiliation.

What's Catholic about these schools is not the externals of Catholic piety, many of which (meatless Fridays, for example) have disappeared from the general Catholic culture. Some Catholic colleges don't even have the traditional crucifix in each classroom.

Very much alive, however, are the Catholic faith's core values.

Father Murphy uses the method popularized by Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman in their 1982 book,

The Search for Excellence: Lessons from America's Best Run Companies. He visits five Catholic colleges and, using interviews and surveys, uncovers each college's values in its stories and its culture.

The lessons that successful corporations are learning from management gurus apply equally to Catholic colleges, writes Father Murphy. An organization is successful today primarily because its chief executive officer is strong, competent, but not authoritarian. "Effective leaders are always preaching," explains Father Murphy. They tell the stories of their colleges morning to night.

These stories are inspiring. Stories about nursing students who volunteer round-the-clock to help a fellow student overcome a serious physical disability. Stories of faculty who stretch to make their campus more personal. Stories about staff who maintain con-

tact with alumni in their times of need.

Father Murphy claims that these stories and the values they represent document "how Catholic universities and colleges are different. The reader won't find these values nor people talking about these values in secular institutions."

The priest-author leaves it to a fine afterword by Ann O'Hara Graff to explain how values like "caring," "academic quality," or "respect for the person" are related to Catholicism. I'm not convinced that these values are uniquely Catholic. In fact, I invite Father Murphy to visit my so-called "secular institution."

Nonetheless, his research with its profiles of five colleges is important information for anyone thinking about the future of higher education.

Droel is an instructor and campus minister at Moraine Valley Community College, Palos Hills, Ill.

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