

Style overshadows content in new comedies

By Gerri Pare and Henry Herx
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — The Addams family has two new additions — a mustachioed baby and a murderous bride — in *Addams Family Values* (Paramount).

The sequel reassembles Anjelica Huston and Raul Julia as the preening parents of new baby boy Pubert (played by Kaitlyn and Kristin Hooper). Family legend, however, hints that now one of the other children must die, so sister Wednesday (Christina Ricci) and brother Pugsley (Jimmy Workman) instead decide to dispatch Pubert without delay.



Gomez (Raul Julia) has his hands full with Baby Pubert in *Addams Family Values*.



Paramount Pictures

The Addams family assembles for the marriage of Fester and Debbie.

After three failed attempts, the story veers toward the more predictable machinations of the nanny (Joan Cusack), who lures lovestruck Uncle Fester (Christopher Lloyd) into wedlock so she can become a wealthy widow — and the sooner the better.

As the nanny orchestrates an explosive honeymoon, Wednesday and Pugsley plan revenge on their peers after being miserably marooned among scores

of smiling, well-adjusted children at summer camp.

Based on cartoonist Charles Addams' New Yorker magazine characters, director Barry Sonnenfeld scores more on its concern for style than content in this uneven sequel.

The whole killer nanny subplot is tired and overly broad while the let's-kill-the-baby scenario is darkly funny — when seen as the comic horror-fantasy it

is — but clearly should not be seen by children.

The weak narrative merely strings together grotesque situations that alternate moments of mirth with scenes that sag.

The dialogue, however, at times sparkles with a hint of satire, especially between serenely strange Morticia and Gomez. They also get to execute some sensational spins and swirls as they enjoy an elaborately entangled tango, the movie's best set-piece.

Ricci nearly steals the show with her deadpan portrayal of Wednesday, and an unusually glamorous Cusack hams it up with gusto as the bride dying to wear black.

Enhancing the creepy mood are the macabre visuals, bizarre decor and a few amusing special effects, but overall this is a comedy of occasional wit done in by too much slapstick mayhem that lacks originality.

Due to frequent comic menace to a baby, violence played for laughs and occasional 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 Three Musketeers'

The fancy free-for-all is all for nothing in this trashy comic-book adaptation of Alexandre Dumas' *The Three Musketeers* (Disney).

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