

USCCB rates recent movies

NEW YORK (CNS) — The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has reviewed the following films which have been rated by the Motion Picture Association of America as PG-13 — parents strongly cautioned.

'PASSIONADA'

Director Dan Ireland's charming tale of second chances and love's healing powers is set in a New England Portuguese-American fishing community where former card shark (Jason Isaacs) lies about his past to the widow (Sofia Milos) he has fallen for as her daughter insists he teach her card counting in exchange for encouraging her mom to date him. An implied affair. The USCCB rating is A-III — adults.

'S.W.A.T.'

Based on a 1970s TV series, director Clark Johnson's film about an elite Los Angeles anti-crime unit (including Colin Farrell and Samuel L. Jackson) assigned to guard an international drug kingpin en route to a federal penitentiary draws a distinction between "good" and "bad" guys but treats violence as entertainment. Much violence, some profanity and crude sexual language. The USCCB rating is A-IV — adults, with reservations.

'Freaky Friday' fine fantasy

David DiCerto/CNS

NEW YORK — A feuding mother and daughter get to view the generation gap from the flip side in the appealing fantasy-comedy "Freaky Friday" (Disney).

While the book by Mary Rodgers has been well mined, including a 1977 version starring then-12 year old Jodie Foster, director Mark S. Waters gives this thematic chestnut enough of a contemporary spin to make it refreshingly entertaining.

As in any fable, the set-up is relatively simple: a mother, straight-laced psychiatrist Tess Coleman (Jamie Lee Curtis), and her antithetical, rock 'n' roll daughter Anna (Lindsay Lohan) wake up one morning trapped in each other's body. They quickly trace the mystical mischief back to a pair of magical fortune cookies given to them at a Chinatown eatery.

Much of their bickering revolves around typical generational grievances — each thinking the other's life is a relative cakewalk.

Tess, a widow about to remarry, doesn't understand why Anna won't warm up to her doting fiance, Ryan (Mark Harmon). Anna questions her mom's support of her high-decibel, heavy metal musical aspirations. With the wedding less than 48 hours away, both desperately try to figure a way to reverse the spell.

The body-switch device offers a fertile arena for comedy. Tess, wearing the body-pierced shell of a 15-year-old, gets to taste high school again and place some maternal



Disney Enterprises/CNS
Jamie Lee Curtis and Lindsay Lohan star in a scene from Walt Disney Pictures' "Freaky Friday."

speed bumps in the path of Jake (Chad Michael Murray), the edgy biker-boy Anna is pining over, while Anna, trapped in her mom's menopausal skin, must contend with Tess' neurotic patients.

The movie imparts a valuable message about the importance of family and understanding between generations, evenhandedly exposing the prejudices while celebrating the differences of each. Both Tess and Anna earn a deeper appreciation of and respect for one another — a lesson in tolerance that transcends gen-

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eration gap issues. Also commendable is the story's insistence that the fortune cookie's spell can only be broken by an act of selfless love.

Curtis seems in her element letting loose as the adult-sized adolescent. Lohan is equally convincing as the dowdy shrink immured in the perils of puberty.

"Freaky Friday," charming and sweet but not overly sentimental, neither insults viewers' intelligence nor offends their sensibilities.

The film also touches on peoples' growing inability to communicate, despite ever-evolving modes of communication. Through much of the film Tess is unable to break through Anna's defenses and really connect with her. The spotlight of irony is cast on this communication problem when Tess is shown filling her pocketbook with an assortment of cell phones, pagers and Palm Pilots — the accoutrements of a world of individuals increasingly isolated by their interconnectedness.

Due to complicated thematic elements and some mildly crude language, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops rating is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

DiCerto is on the staff of the Office for Film & Broadcasting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

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