

Crash course: Fate teaches tough lessons in *Don Roos'* brilliant *'Bounce'*

by Deanna Symoski

"It's not a lie," he says, "it's just not the whole truth." That's Buddy Amaral, a professional liar with a swagger that befits his expensive suits. He talks fast and closes the deal even faster, so in our worlds of skepticism, we shouldn't like him. The genius of *Bounce*, Don Roos' complex new drama, is that we do.

Bounce is the story of brash L.A. ad executive Buddy Amaral (Ben Affleck) who gives his ticket to a fellow traveler named Greg (Tony Goldwyn) stranded at O'Hare Airport. With a beautiful blonde prospect in the airport bar, Buddy figures it's an even trade. That is until the plane crashes and everyone is killed. His guilt inspires a bout with alcoholism that Buddy tries to

end by making amends. He finds Greg's wife, Abby (Gwenyth Paltrow), just to make sure she's okay. What ensues is a complicated dilemma about truth and the ability to forgive when fate would have you bounce back.

The story is a unique spin on the formulaic romances that have all but solidified the phrase "chick flick." The power here is not so much in the love story but in the fallibility of human hearts and the consequences they produce. With the subtlety of intelligent acting, the film glimpses the limits of moral reasoning and the shades of gray in the spectrum of truth. Roos wisely blurs the line between playing God and simply playing the hand you're dealt.

Affleck trades in his movie star

status to become a bona fide actor. Experiencing more range and depth than his previous films would allow, Affleck is the swirling storm of guilt in Abby's universe. However, he is also her calm. It is this duality that thrusts him into a limbo somewhere between selfish pleasure and inevitable pain. Affleck wears the role well. His initial egoism seems as natural as his regret seems sincere. In a quieter metamorphosis than *Jerry Maguire*, the beauty of Affleck's Buddy is his humbling plunge into humanity, complete with mistakes.

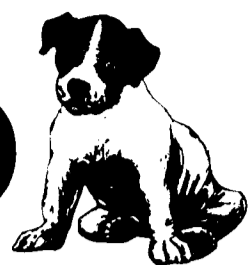
Paltrow is charming as usual, though at times, her attempt at domesticity comes off as clumsiness. Her suburban character is not merely a catalyst for Buddy's

change, however, as Abby's turmoil comes from the confusion between love and convenience. In a particularly memorable scene, Abby explains how everyone keeps telling her to "bounce" as she goes from crying over her late husband to kissing Buddy. Someone in the theater whispered, "How could she do that?" Roos' film asks the same question.

Paltrow delivers a touching performance and together with Affleck, the pair is mesmerizing on all of the film's many levels. It isn't their off-screen compatibility, but rather their on-screen trepidation. They tiptoe into each other's worlds with all the grace fate allows in a story that questions the decisions we make in the lives we dare to touch.

Sic' Em FIDO

by Deanna Symoski



CHILL OUT

Ice-T challenges hypocrisy with personal growth

There isn't anything particularly interesting on television Friday nights, though on those rare occasions that I'm home, I fold laundry and watch *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*. I like the guy that used to be on the *Fanelli Boys*. Anyway, a couple of weeks ago as I'm trying to find the match for the sock in my hand, I look up to watch the riveting last moments of the show only to see Ice-T come walking into the cast.

I didn't hear about this before the moment I stopped looking for my other sock, so I was a little surprised. I mean, don't they know who this guy is? Besides a couple of moderately successful films, Ice-T helped push rap metal with his later albums. But it was his 1992 album titled *Body Count* that received a storm of attention for a controversial cut called "Cop Killer."

Think what you will of the song, but its presence on *Body Count* created more fuss than a presidential election. Law enforcement agencies in Texas and New York state demanded boycotts of all Time Warner products. The Los Angeles City Council asked Time Warner and retailers to stop selling the album and no less than sixty members of Congress deemed the song "despicable" and "vile." Even George Bush, president at the time, went so far as to speak out against "Cop Killer." Ice-T was facing an unforgiving battle, but persisted in his fight to keep the song on the album and to make his message clear.

"I think cops should feel threatened," the rapper has said. "I feel threatened. I grew up threatened. [The police] should know they can't take a life without retaliation." Ice-T maintained the song was not geared towards all cops, but those who abused their power. After vigorous defense by both Time Warner and Ice-T, however, the rapper decided to pull the song from *Body Count* due to death threats against its distributor.

Fast forward to the last few seconds of *Law & Order: SVU* and you might be well ahead of me. After going to the mat for a song about his disgust with cops, he walks onto my television set as one.

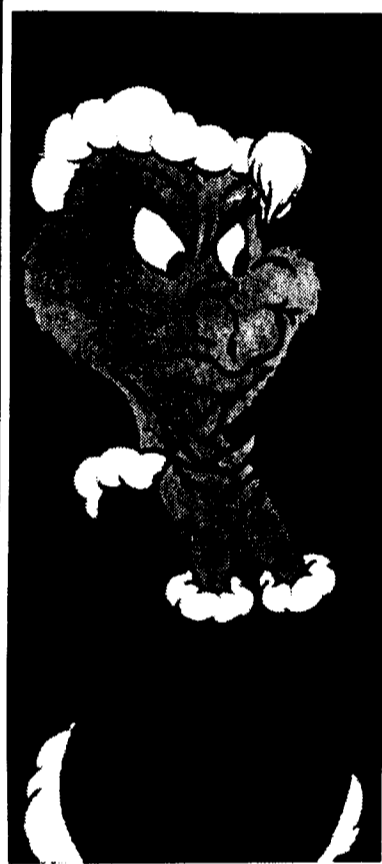
And it wouldn't be the first time the one-time rapper defected to the other side. In 1997, he collaborated on a show called *Players* where he played an ex-con released to help the police. The show was created by the same crew as *Law & Order*, but was short-lived and eventually cancelled by NBC.

Perhaps this is Ice-T's version of selling out—an inevitable consequence of prolonged fame. As the times change, so must the images that entertainers maintain in order to keep up, even if it means changing so drastically as to become a hypocrite. You'd do it, too, if it meant meeting the mortgage payment for your Beverly Hills estate. Singing about killing cops may have been fashionable for Ice-T in 1992, but "Cop Killer" now? That was so eight years ago. And we tend to discount rappers if years later they are still most popular for the cut that ended up on "Monsters of Rap" right between the SugarHill Gang and Rob Base.

Or perhaps what could be considered hypocrisy is really an example of personal growth. I prefer this one. I would like to think that even entertainers who sing about killing cops learn some things along the way. Maybe they cope with initial anger or digest societal obstacles. Maybe they realize the fire that fueled them in the beginning burnt out after a few years in a new environment. Maybe they understand that the successful entertainers get fired up about new problems and the unsuccessful ones don't. And maybe, above all, entertainers grow in their careers and learn that the most effective way to touch someone is not to shock them, but to speak to them, and maybe, just maybe, that means there's hope for Eminem.

It's not easy being mean

by Erin McCarty
staff writer



I suspect I was not the only one whose eyes widened with astonishment at the prospect of a live-action version of that undisputed Christmas classic, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. How would they be able to create, with real people, the utterly fantastical world that Dr. Seuss created? Well, the animated movie had to add quite a bit of narration (in verse, of course) and drag out the descent from and ascent to Mt. Crumpit and the midnight raid of all the houses in Whoville. Not to mention those songs, which included the infamous "You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch."

Christmas is a time of many wonders, and one of the marvels it has brought this year is a movie that lives up to its legendary predecessor. Directed by Ron Howard, *Grinch* begins with a snowy winter sky. We are drawn into one snowflake by the camera, and we follow the enticing verse

narration of Anthony Hopkins into the heart of the snowflake, a microscopic town called Whoville. Now, these are not the Whos whose love transcends the lack of material possessions. Indeed, their society appears to be driven by consumerism, and through them we see an exaggerated mirror of our own country's holiday madness. As the whole town bustles about buying mountains of gifts and trying to outdo one another's decorations, only little Cindy Lou Who seems to see beyond the sales.

Atop Mt. Crumpit, overlooking Whoville, is the Grinch, a furry green curmudgeon who lives with his much more mirthful mutt Max and abides in a cave littered with recycled trash from the Whos' junkyard. When he comes to town for a little trickery, he has a run-in with Cindy Lou. From this point on, the little girl is determined to get to the heart of the Grinch (she knows it's there) and hopefully reclaim Christmas at the same time.

We all know how the story ends, but how we get there is considerably more complicated here. Jim Carrey, recognizable only by his inexhaustible energy, is not only hilarious in his portrayal of the Grinch, he is sympathetic. We can see that his heart is fighting to outgrow its two-sizes-too-small position. Through the detective work of Cindy Lou, we find out how ridicule by classmates turned the Grinch into a bitter recluse. Taylor Momsen as Cindy Lou is too adorable for words, but in a much more heart-rending fashion than the little tyke who asked, "Why are you taking our Christmas tree?" Her soul, unadulterated by consumerism and societal biases, has the strength to challenge her own people and to bring light back into the life of one who has lived in the dark for such a very long time.

The cast is rounded out by Josh Ryan Evans as the young Grinch, Molly Shannon as Cindy Lou's mother, Bill Irwin as her father, Jeffrey Tambor as the mayor and Christine Baranski as the Grinch's love interest, Martha May. As for the sets, costumes, and make-up, "stunning" is not too strong a word. Whoville is exactly as I would have imagined it, with all sorts of creative

details worked in that never had a chance to come to light before. Likewise, the Grinch's lair is deliciously putrid. And the Grinch is no less so. He is covered from head to toe with green fur and has glaring yellow eyes. The transformation is so complete that only those wacky facial expressions give Carrey, whose deepened voice is menacing and sinister, away. Each of the Whos sports a strange hairstyle—the most elaborate of which finds a home on Cindy Lou's head—and a nose befitting a small furry creature. No character remains unchanged.

It's always dangerous to try to build upon perfection, and *The Grinch* could have been a major disaster. Fortunately for all, this is a film that Theodor Geisel himself would have been proud to view. In it, the magic that Seuss first created is brought to life more convincingly than ever. Amidst all of the craziness that now surrounds Christmas, take a step back and dare to catch the true holiday spirit from a little girl named Cindy Lou. After all, as a fitting Christmas carol proclaims, "At Christmas time we all can be children for a while."



Dr. Seuss's original animated Grinch (Above left) and the movie poster of Ron Howard's new live action remake, starring Jim Carrey in the title role (Above).

New Releases

Movies

No New Releases
(look for Dec. 8 releases)

Video*

Beyond the Mat
Land Before Time VII
Nutty Professor II
The Klumps

Music*

Aaliyah
Alice in Chains
Live
K-Ci & JoJo
Lil Wayne
Memphis Bleek
Usher
Roger Waters

DVD*

The Alamo
Gone in 60 Seconds
Nutty Professor II
The Klumps

* release date 12/5

Spielberg and Hanks reunite for *Shooting War*, a compelling documentary about cameramen and still photographers covering World War II. Thursday, Dec. 4, at 9 p.m. on ABC