Wild Things falls short of expectations

by Jon Stubbs
features editor

The critics have claimed that John McNaughton's *Wild Things* is "smart and sexy." Sexy, indeed (it's borderline porno), but "smart" may be a stretch . Matt Dillon stars as Sam Lombardo, the hunky guidance counselor at Blue Bay High School, Florida. Kelly Van Ryan (Denise Richards), is a seductive senior at Blue Bay who obviously has the hots for Lombardo and flirts with him constantly. After washing his car at his house for a school fundraiser she slips into Sam's house to dry off and comes out claiming that Lombardo raped her.

Sam Lombardo now becomes the enemy of the town and he is taken to trial. When another student at Blue Bay, Suzie Toller (Neve Campbell) tells Detective Ray Duquette (Kevin Bacon) that she was also raped by Lombardo, Sam's problems become worse. However, in court she confesses that the whole thing was just a scam by Kelly to frame Lombardo because he wasn't interested in her. Sam is awarded $8 million in damages, and everything seems to be resolved. The only problem is that all of this is over within the first hour of the film.

The next forty minutes of the movie seem to drag on forever. The plot does thicken and new developments unfold, but none that are not predictable. The movie is excruciatingly boring until the last few scenes where numerous plot twists and surprises pop up. The slow middle part and the rapid pace of the end of the film contrast each other and annoy the viewer. Director John McNaughton confesses that he doesn't like most thrillers he sees: "I read the first five pages of the script, and I can already predict what will happen on the last two pages. With *Wild Things*, I read about thirty pages, and when I got to the end, I had no idea what was going to happen." This is true, but pages 30-60 of the screenplay needed some doctoring to make the middle of the film more interesting. If this had been done, *Wild Things* would have been much more enjoyable.

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Other things that took away from the film were Matt Dillon's horrible acting and screenwriter Stephen Peters' poorly written dialogue. The dialogue seems to rob the film of any possible character development. Phrases like "Why don't you say that to may face!?" are just boring and clichéd. They lack originality and are the products of careless screenwriting.

Wild Things could have been a very exciting thriller if the film's pace was kept constant, a better actor was hired for the role of Sam Lombardo, and if better dialogue and character development took place. These subtle mistakes made the film mediocre instead of the highly entertaining and successful film it could have been.

photo courtesy of Columbia Tri Star

Detective Ray Duquette (Kevin Bacon) questions Blue Bay society seductress Kelly Van Ryan (Denise Richards).

photo courtesy of Columbia Tri Star

Sexy Blue Bay High guidance couselor Sam Lombardo (Matt Dillon) and Blue Bay outsider Suzie Toller (Neve Campbell) make unlikely conspirators in *Wild Things*.

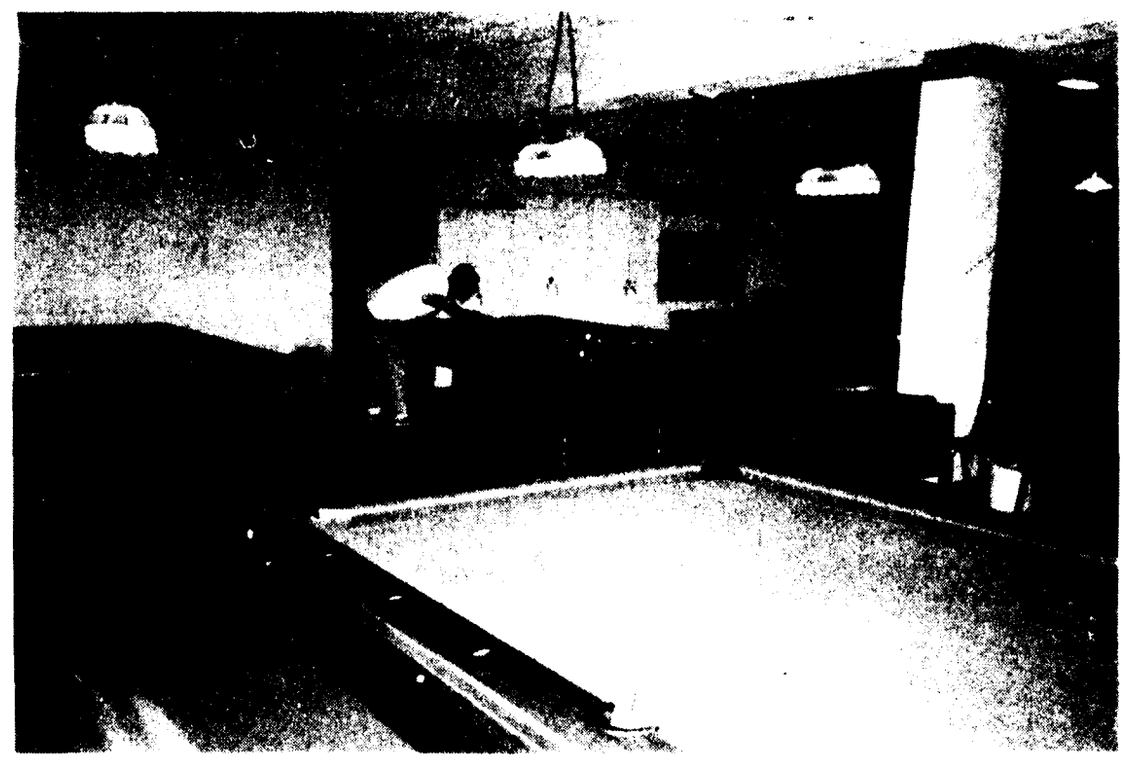
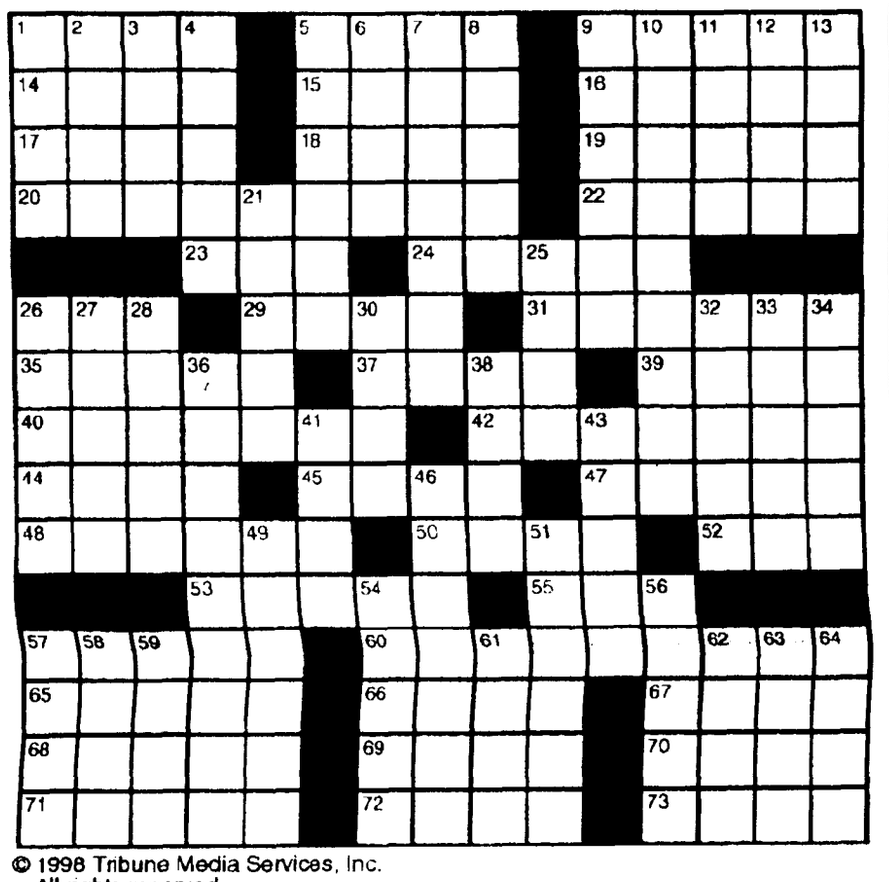


photo by Andrea Zaffino

A student shooting pool in the Reed Building's Back Room. Story in next week's Features.



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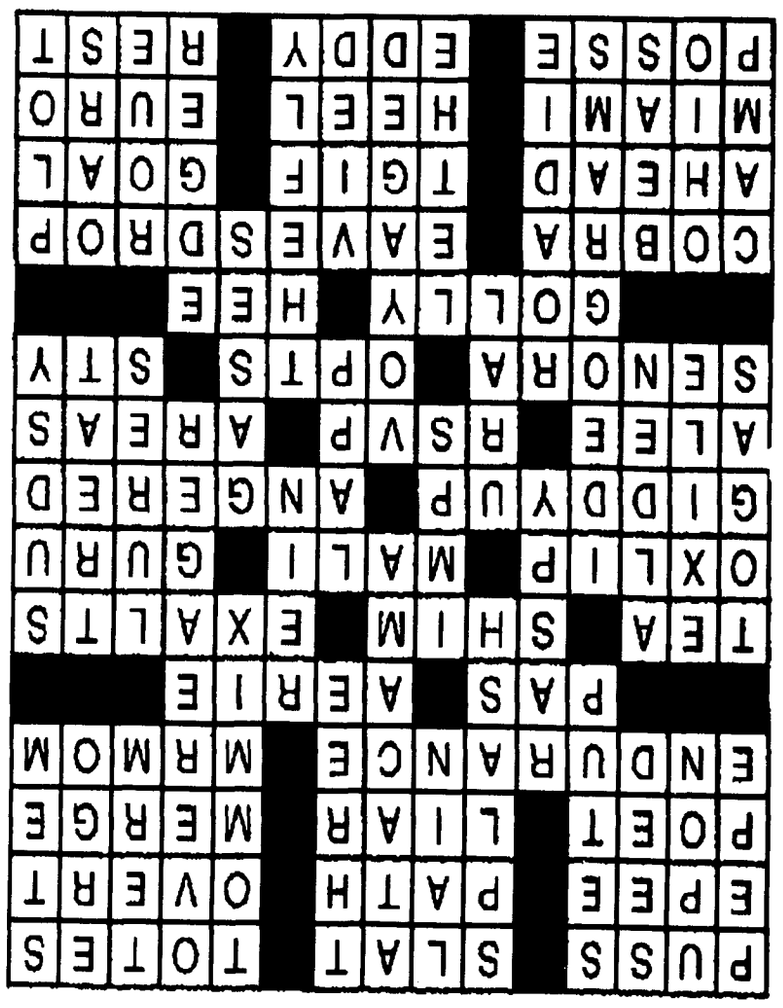
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