

The 'Butterfly' debate

review by Daniel J. Stasiewski
 managing editor

A few weeks ago, a rumor that Ashton Kutcher had been forced from his role in Cameron Crowe's next film " Elizabethtown " (scheduled for 2005) had become the talk of Hollywood. Tinseltown gossip said that he got the boot for bad acting. After sitting through Kutcher's impotent, MTV-style thriller "The Butterfly Effect," the rumor is even harder to ignore.

Kutcher's acting isn't the worst part of the film, though it does make his unlikable character even harder to empathize with. "The Butterfly Effect" becomes tiresome and contrived, instead, because the filmmakers attempt to outsmart their audience with far-out plot twists, resulting in a film with so many plot holes it might as well be a colander.

In "Butterfly," Kutcher plays Evan Treborn, who we first meet as he's attempting to "escape" from a mental institution. After he finishes writing a letter, making sure to read it aloud just so no one in the audience has to read or worse, ponder, the film flashes back 13 years when he was sane and his life was only troubled by the lack of a father. Back then, his father was in a mental institution, and Treborn's mother (Melora Waters) suspected her son's blackouts were going to lead him to be institutionalized, as well.

Both Treborn's mother and doctor decided the boy should visit his father for stress reduction, which would have been fine if his father didn't try to strangle him. Treborn blacked out during most of the incident, just as he did when he was forced into performing a sex act on camera for a friend's father. After a few more character-building incidents, like blowing up a woman and her infant child, the film makes its way back to Treborn as an adult, or more precisely a college student, presumably before he goes crazy.

Treborn, a psych major, attempts to figure out why he blacks out and luckily he can reflect on his past through 13 years of journals. He can easily go back and read about the various incidents. One reading, however, makes Treborn think he can actually relive his memories and change the past. Treborn even attempts to contact his childhood friend Sally (Amy Smart) to see if what he presumes to be molestation by her father actually occurred. Sadly, repeated sexual assaults wore down the girl's strength. When Treborn makes her remember one more time, she kills herself.

The Good Samaritan can't let a suicide he instigated stand, especially when he can time travel. He goes back to the molestation memory, sets the father straight, and when he comes back, he's sleeping in bed with Sally. The past, however, doesn't like to be changed and Treborn has to fix

the present repeatedly, each time making it worse and worse.

Too much worse, actually. In "The Butterfly Effect," the present is always so screwed up the characters are forced to become prostitutes and prison bitches. Treborn's mother even gets cancer in one reworked present. Behind Treborn's attempts to create a Utopian world, there's an overwhelming sense of selfishness. It's almost as if the filmmakers wanted Treborn to possess the qualities of a genius who is driven mad by his own brilliance, but Kutcher doesn't make his power feel like a burden.

The only time Kutcher's believable is when he's wearing Greek letters on his chest and screwing Smart's character. He's unbearably flimsy as a dramatic actor, especially when he's so keen to make his "Dude, Where's My Car?" persona break out in this film. The audience even has a hard time taking him seriously. At the screening I attended, one of Kutcher's "dramatic" moments resulted in a theater full of laughter.

No one else in the cast is truly worth mentioning, all of them being too "Saved by the Bell" for their performances as broken humans to feel genuine. They lack the grittiness that brought Halle Berry the Oscar for "Monster's Ball," letting their own preoccupation with their status as the future of Hollywood to take charge.

"The Butterfly Effect" has one flashback that takes place while Treborn and his childhood pals are watching David Fincher's thriller "Se7en." Ironic, considering this film is like a watered-down, de-mythified version of any psychological thriller that is too contrived to even be compared to a Fincher film. The concept may have succeeded with experienced screenwriters and directors, but this film doesn't have even the appeal of bad episode of "The Twilight Zone."

review by Erika Jarvis
 a&e editor

If you are looking for a feel-good movie this winter, you won't find it in "The Butterfly Effect." As Ashton Kutcher grows a beard, it seems that he appears to be shying away from the goofball, trucker hat-wearing image he has created for himself.



NEW LINE CINEMAS
 Aston Kutcher takes a shot a dramatic acting in "The Butterfly Effect."

"The Butterfly Effect" is Kutcher's first stab at becoming a serious actor. A lot of talk has been going around about Kutcher breaking out of his many roles as the "funny guy." This is Kutcher's first attempt and probably won't be his last.

I am not sure how the script for "The Butterfly Effect" landed in Kutcher's lap, but quite honestly, I'm glad he got the part. I'm not going to sit here through 700 words and tell you how this was the most amazing movie I have ever seen, but I'm not going to pan it.

Sitting here and regurgitating

what Dan has already told you about the movie, plot wise, would be a waste of space. Instead, I could simply state how Kutcher is plain old hot in "Butterfly."

Well, that's stating the obvious and my objective in this article is to tell you why I liked this movie and to get you to go see it. If I don't do a good enough job, Kutcher's looks might just get you to shell out eight bucks.

Kutcher's main goal in "Butterfly" is to change his past to make sure his future is better. Yet, as the first frame of the movie tells the audience supposedly, the flap of a butterfly's wings on one side of the earth can effect the lives of others on the opposite side. As Kutcher

goes through a series of trials and errors in his past to rectify his future, the same thing occurs.

Changing the past dramatically effects his future, unfortunately not for the better. Yet, as he goes through these trips to the past not only do you empathize with him, you are so drawn in that you don't immediately notice that the plot is incredibly far-fetched.

Obviously, there is no way that by reading a journal of his childhood activities that he can be taken back to the time of his blackouts and change the events that occurred.

It is the scenes in which Kutcher is emotionally drained by his decisions to rectify the events in his life that also drain the audience emotionally. I can honestly say that I have never seen a movie before where after the movie was over, my friends and I sat in the audience just amazed.

The roller coaster that the audience is taken on is one that compares to the ones at Cedar Point. As Kutcher realizes the past and lives are not something to toy with, he finally comes to realize how he can go about changing things for the better.

After careful thinking it is easy to see that after almost two hours that had the director not been careful, the movie could have gone on for hours. With the flash backs so often in the movie there are many scenes in the movie in which Kutcher is not seen. Yet, his character is seen at multiple ages 7, 13 and themagain sometime during college.

It is the building of the plot early in the movie that helps the audience catch up to Kutcher in college. Later when Kutcher is seen changing his past, he also changes the future of the other characters in the movie.

He changes his past to leave him a paraplegic, diagnose his mother with lung cancer, and even changes his childhood friend, Sally, into a heroin addict.

The scary part about seeing all of this is you start to think: What would have happened differently in my life had I didn't do this ... or what would have happened if I didn't do that.

The movie might not be appealing to all, especially my counterpart. Yet under all the not-so-Oscar-worthy acting there is a plot that makes you think. The movie couldn't have been that bad. It opened at No. 1 in the box office.

Maybe it was Kutcher's model looks that brought the audience to the theaters, but what ever it was, it got them there. No matter what it is, this movie has people talking. As the saying goes, there's no such thing as bad press.



BAY CITY TATTOO CO.

759 E. 1st Street
 Erie, PA 16501
 (814) 456-7260
 EST. 1992

12-10 Mon-Thur 12-12 Fri-Sat
 4-10 Sun

Hospital Sterilization

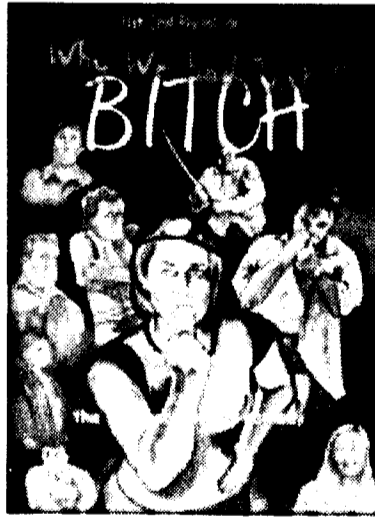
**Largest Tattoo Shop
 On The East Coast!**

15+ Off with Student ID

Appointments Available



EVENT SPOTLIGHT



SCREEN VISIONS INDEPENDENT FILM SERIES

Presents

WHY WE HAD TO KILL BITCH

featuring a Q&A session with director
JP Nickel

Shot subjectively, the film follows the character Kevin as he uses his digital camcorder to capture a day with his friend Eugene for a film class. Eugene is, to put it nicely, a big loser who is still lamenting over the breakup with his ex, simply called "Bitch." During the day Eugene falls for a new, perfect girl, loses her, and tries to get her back.

The catch is Kevin has always filmed his friends, so the narrative is supported by flashbacks of Eugene's life with Bitch, a grand-jury testimony and "the incident."

WINNER

BEST FEATURE LENGTH COMEDY

Motion Picture Commission of Pittsburgh's 2003 Fall Film Festival

Arts & Entertainment Highlights

Top 40 Singles

- "Hey Ya!" Outkast
- "The Way You Move" Outkast featuring Sleepy Brown
- "Someday" Nickelback
- "It's My Life" No Doubt
- "Here Without You" 3 Doors Down
- "Suga Suga" Baby Bash featuring Frankie J
- "With You" Jessica Simpson
- "Slow Jamz" Twista featuring Kayne West and Jamie Foxx
- "Yeah!" Usher featuring Lil Jon & Ludacris
- "Milkshake" Kelis

According to Billboard.com

Album Releases on Feb. 3

- Five for Fighting--Battle for Everything**
Incubus--Crow Left of the Murder
TLC--All of it

New Movie Releases

- The Perfect Score:** Scarlett Johansson, Erika Christensen
The Big Bounce: Owen Wilson, Charlie Sheen
You Got Served: Steve Harvey, Marques Houston

DVD Releases on Feb. 3

- "Planet of the Apes:" 35th anniv. edition
 "My Fair Lady:" special edition
 "Labyrinth:" collectors edition

It's all about the new editions this week for DVDs