

'Irreconcilable differences' divorced from reality

A Movie Review by Don Strausburger

Over the past five years, Moral Majority groups have spent a great deal of time emphasizing the importance of spending time with your children, with little help from the media.

With the release of the film, "Irreconcilable Differences," however, the subject has been brought into the spotlight.

The film stars Ryan O'Neal, Shelley Long and Drew Barrymore as the Brotsky family, a stereotypical Hollywood family.

The action begins with Casey Brotsky, an alienated eight-year-old played by Barrymore, in the office of her lawyer planning the case in which she wants to divorce her parents. In epic Greek style, the film then flashes back to show the initial meeting of Norman Brotsky and Lucy Van Patten, played by O'Neal and Long, the four-day relationship which leads to their marriage, and early indications of how they ignore Casey.

The flashbacks show the development of the careers of Norman, a film buff who longs to be a movie director, and Lucy, an aspiring writer who, at the time, wrote children's books. The two become a team to write a screenplay for what becomes a hit movie in which time we see how they begin spending less time with their daughter.

As the public appearances for their movie continue, the viewer begins to see the growing chasm between Casey and her parents. In addition, a chasm is beginning to grow between Lucy, who did most of the writing for the film, and Norman, who has been getting most of the credit.

The couple finally splits leaving typically bitter feelings between everyone involved and further separating Casey from both of her parents. After the divorce, Lucy takes advantage of the time she now has and begins to write a novel about her experiences in marriage. The book becomes a best-seller and Lucy begins to spend all of her time working and no time with the daughter of whom she won custody rights.

Eventually, the entire situation becomes intolerable for Casey and the idea of divorce from her parents is introduced.

"Irreconcilable Differences" is an interesting character study; however, many of the

characters show evidence of being stereotypical of people the spectator expects to see in Hollywood. Norman and Lucy often appear to be classic tragic heroes who are victimized by their lives, rather than parents who are not interested in spending time with their daughter.

Casey, although portrayed well, could be the role that

makes Drew Barrymore a stereotypical actress. The role is much too similar to her role as the bratty sister in "E.T." This is very unfortunate for Barrymore who at the age of eight could be the youngest typecast star since Shirley Temple.

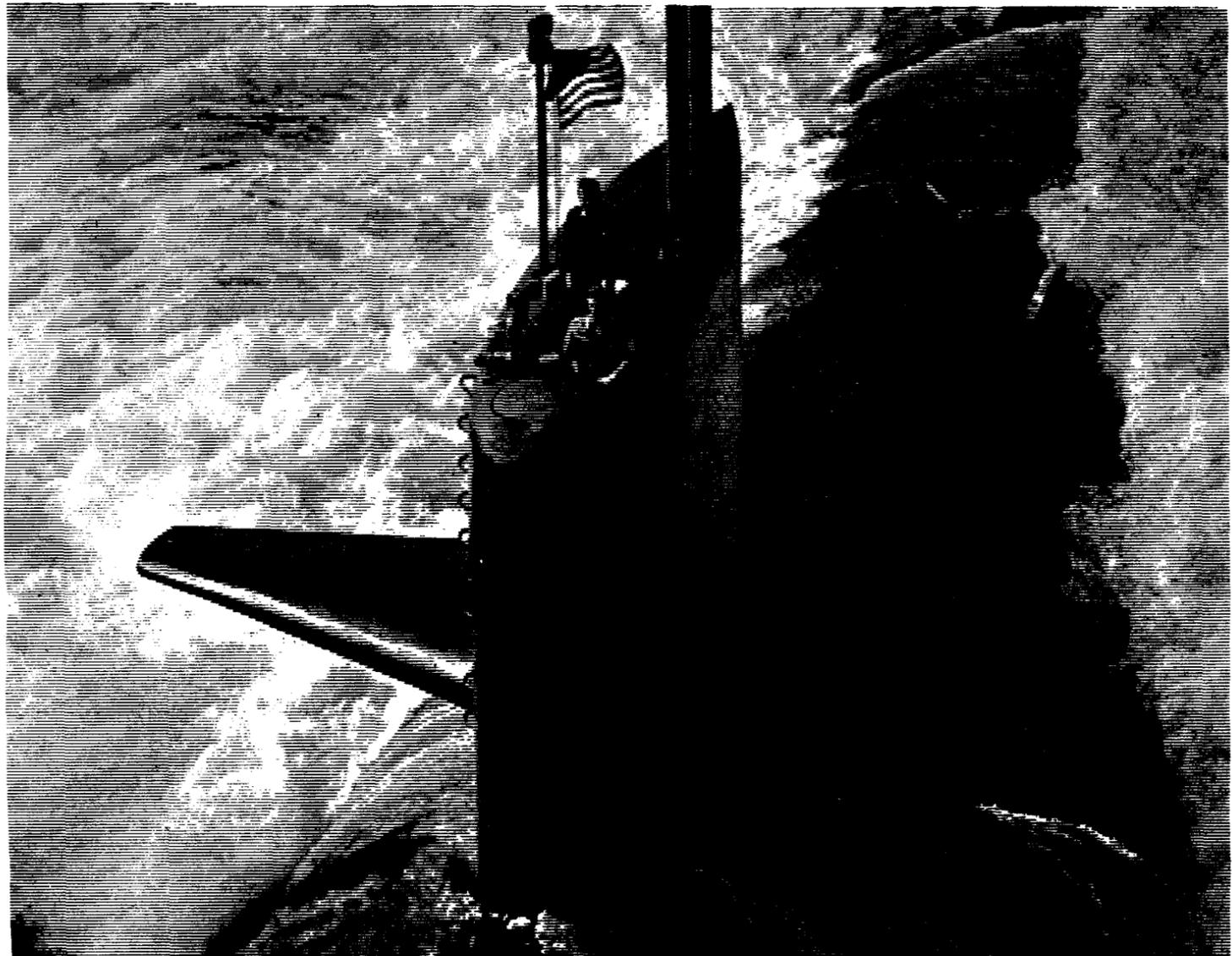
The characters lack genuine emotion throughout the movie

with the exception of the end of the trial scene. Out of nowhere the film changes gears to deliver a serious message after nearly two hours of, for the most part, light-hearted drama. Until the

end, we see that Casey is suffering from her parents' rejection but are never given enough to understand why she wants the

"divorce."

"Irreconcilable Differences" is, at times, a very interesting, important film. However in its attempt to equal recent hits like "Ordinary People" and "Kramer vs. Kramer," this film is only a cheap imitation. The film presents a topical social problem, but does not seem able to handle it.



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