

The Object of My Oppression

REVIEWED BY DONALD EGGERT

film

Did you hear that we "made it?" I was shocked to find this out myself when I watched Nicholas Hynters ("The Crucible," "The Madness of King George") new film "The Object of My Affection" last week. Apparently, homophobia is no longer a problem for gays according to the latest attempt at mainstreaming gay experience on the silver screen. Though never explicitly saying, "the gays

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have made it, lets just incorporate their quirky lives into a gen-xy plot-twist on love and family," it is obvious to me that this film wants to congratulate liberal America for welcoming their gay brothers and sisters into comfy upper middle-classdom. We accept you so much, we don't even need to talk about that nasty oppression thing anymore! Isn't that great?

The films non-acknowledgment of how homophobia and heterosexism oppress gays in, yes, the 1990s, is so blatant that one must wonder if this omission is intentional. It reminds me of the scene in "Love! Valour! Compassion!" when Jason Alexander's character announces at a summer retreat that there will be no discussion of AIDS this summer. Lets not talk about the bad stuff anymore. Who wants to be depressed? Lets just *be*, man!

Throughout the film, the audience is bombarded with images that contradict the traditional portrait of the nuclear family and heterosexual relationships. Multi-racial, cross-spiritual, and homosexual identities are the norm and presented without judgment or comment. Everyone is comfortable with difference. Did you hear that "we made it?"

The main plot of the film, adapted from a novel by Stephen McCauley, revolves around Nina's (Jennifer Aniston) decision to keep her baby and not allow the biological father to help in the parenting. I never thought I'd see Jennifer Aniston play a 20-something feminist single mother working in a Brooklyn community center, but her performance is convincing. She rejects her labor

activist (yet, misogynist) boyfriend Vince (John Pankow) in favor of her new gay roommate George (Paul Rudd). As a 1st grade teacher at a snotty private school for over-achieving multi-cultural youths, he is a shoe-in for the role of alterna-dad. During the pregnancy, Nina and George (who have no social lives to speak of) spend every waking moment together which of course leads to...the dreaded conversion scene.

Don't worry, no "Chasing Amy" success story this time. Just as Nina lunges for George's chinos, his ex-boyfriend Joley (Tim Daly) calls to invite him on a weekend trip to George's college alma mater where he will be giving a lecture. Joley is the gay man that everyone loves to hate. Self-absorbed, ostentatiously wealthy, and whining about middle-age, he clearly clashes with cute, marriage-material George.

During George's nostalgic trip back to college, he ducks out of Joley's panel discussion and meets aspiring young actor, Paul (Amo Gulinello). He is the protégé and housemate of an older gay director/academic named Rodney (Nigel Hawthorne). Though the two do not sleep together, it is clear that Rodney is in love with young Paul

and bristles at the thought of losing his companionship to George.

As a gesture of good faith, Nina invites Paul and Rodney (whom she assumes are a couple, despite the huge age difference) over to spend Thanksgiving dinner with George and her. The Thanksgiving scene is not only the climax of the movie, it is the ultimate queering of a sacred holiday and the meeting place of unfulfilled love. Of the four individuals at the table, three are gay men and one is a soon-to-be single mother. Paul and George love one another and reject their suitors who do not belong. The statement is: at the end of the day, two men can be happy and in love with each other, but the single mother and the elderly gay man will be left alone with no one. Remember Americans, be you straight or gay, coupling is the root to happiness!

This is a tough lesson to swallow, and perhaps more intriguing than the we-are-still-oppressed message that was ignored. As a universal lesson, this queer Thanksgiving just shifts the focus of oppression from respectable gay relationships to other social taboos like single-mother feminist fag hags and older gay men in love with guys half their age. Of course, these characters find neat resolution to their loneliness in the end, but I won't give the utopia alterna-family away for those of you who haven't seen it.

Despite my criticisms, I would recommend seeing the film. If nothing else, it is entertaining and well-acted. There are also some hilarious lines and scenes peppered throughout the action. Among these are Nina's pronouncement that, "Freud didn't know dick about women."

In another scene, Nina's misogynist boyfriend Vince tells his middle-aged latina union volunteer that his girlfriend is living with a gay man expecting to incite shock or pity from her. Instead, she replies in Spanish that her daughter is a lesbian and that she is the president of Brooklyn Mothers of Latina Lesbians. Then, in English she chants with heavy accent, "Were here. Were queer. Get used to it. Don't fuck with us!" If latina mothers in Brooklyn accept queers then we must have "made it," right?

development of health information and help for the health of BLT's in the state of Vermont. For further info: phone: Lanny 899-4588, or Joy 848-7037.

20 WEDNESDAY

Planning meeting for VCGLR Town Meeting beginning at 6:30pm at the Fletcher Free Library in Burlington. We need your input and support to make this a successful conference. If you have time to devote for publicity, workshop organization or site planning, please contact Virginia (#496-4333) or leave a message via the Coalition toll free number #888-825-4989.

21 THURSDAY

Brattleboro Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force. Final planning for Gay Bingo Location to be announced. FMI 258-9099

Rhiannon in concert. 8 p.m. at Lion d'Or (1690 Ontario E., between Ste. Catherine's and Sherbrooke Streets, near Papineau). Tickets are \$13 Canadian (\$10 for stu-

dents, with ID). For tickets call, (514) 790-1245.

23 SATURDAY

Addison County Youth Aware first Summer Cookout. To be held at the Addison County Parent/Child Center (Rt. 7 South, Monroe St., across from the Citgo Station at the high school.) Set up begins at 6:30, bring whatever you want...soda, music, boyfriend, tofu-burger...

West Brattleboro, Gay Bingo; an evening of camp, candor and faaaabulous prizes. A Benefit for Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force. Mark Herman (aka Mama) will lend his camp style of humor and Toni Amato will share her candid (and rather dry) jokes to create a fun filled evening for everyone. We are encouraged by the MANY local business who were happy to support this event by making donations. Some of the prizes are: overnight stays at, the Saxtons River Inn, Quality Inn, and Chester House Inn including breakfast for two, a wig, oil spray bottles, an office visit

at Brattleboro Naturopathic Clinic and gift certificates to many local stores and service providers. Doors open at 7pm, a variety of food and beverages will be available. West Village Meeting House (off of Route 9 in West Brattleboro). Everybody is welcome! FMI 387-5788

25 MONDAY

Glitter May 25th - Swoon...Swoon is inspired by the story of Nathan Leopold Jr. and Richard Loeb, two Jewish law students who, in 1942, kidnapped and murdered a young boy to illustrate their intellectual superiority to others. Their capture and trial led to international media coverage, and to two movie variations: Alfred Hitchcock's Rope and Richard Fleischer's Compulsion. But the movies neglected to mention that Leopold and Loeb were more than just a criminal couple; they were also partners in bed. Swoon pursues the boys' unusual relationship from plotting to prison bars: What compelled Leopold and Loeb to kill? Did their crime have anything to do with homosexuality? If it didn't, surely their

punishment did. Swoon is a clever, troubling fiction about history, homophobia, ecstasy, and murder. "Swoon is quintessentially a film of its time. It takes on the whole enterprise of 'positive images'... turning the whole thing right on its head."—B. Ruby Rich, Village Voice
See May 4 listing for details.

27 WEDNESDAY

Meeting for people who are interested in being involved in the Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force Vermont CARES office, 73 Main St., Montpelier, 7 PM. More Information: 223-7620

30 SATURDAY

The 11th Annual Walk for Life - 2 pm to 5 pm. Join us in celebrating 11 years of providing services in our community. FMI Michael Fannon 254-4444

Brattleboro Commons. Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force, Information table at

•Cherie & Yolanda...


Tue 10pm, Sat midnight, Sun 11pm
Live broadcasts will be on April 14 and 28, Adelphia channel 15 in Burlington, call local Adelphia cable and request to see the show in your area

•In The Life

Wednesday, May 20 11 p.m. to midnight

The program looks at gay and lesbian issues from around the globe. It visits several continents, examining places where progress for gay civil rights outpaces advances in the U.S. and places that are decades behind. The program looks at personal stories to illustrate the politics, the progress, and often, the persecution. For more information: Ann Curran (802) 655-8059 acurran@vpt.org

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OITM TV GUIDE

•The Vermont Rainbow Connection

Adelphia (Ch 15) (greater Burlington area) Fridays 9:00 p.m.
 Adelphia (Ch 15) (Montpelier, Waterbury, Randolph) 2nd & 4th Fridays 7:30 p.m.
 Lake Champlain (Ch.2) (Colchester area) 2nd & 4th Mondays 8:00 p.m.
 Helicon Cable (Ch. 7) (Barre) 2nd & 4th Mondays 8:30 p.m.
 BCTV (Ch. 8) (Brattleboro) call (802) 257-0888 for airing days/times
 MMCTV (Ch 3) (Richmond, Jericho, Underhill) call (802) 434-2550 for airing days/times

the rally for the Walk for Life sponsored by the Brattleboro Area Aids Project. 2pm to 5pm. Michael Fannon 254-4444 or Bari Shamas 387-5788

june

5 FRIDAY

Annual Spring Soiree at Clay Hill Farm, Ogunquit, ME. FMI: 207-646-6661.

6 SATURDAY

Gender Role-Free Contra Dance for gay/lesbian/bi/transgenders and friends - all welcome Live music, Linda Leslie calling, 8:00-11:00 pm, sliding scale admission \$5-7 Putney Community Center, Christian

CALENDAR CONTINUES, p14