

'Secretariat' a must-see with Lane in lead role



Secretariat

Rated PG

4 bagels out of 5

By Howie Nave

I don't know why, but there's just something about a biopic that I really look forward to seeing. That and because I grew up at the time this story was unfolding (in high school) and because my younger sister had a horse at the time. Whatever the reason, I was already anticipating a cool flick even before screening it.

OK, that, and the fact that Diane Lane was starring as one of the principle players. From the outset I knew this was going to be a good flick because I recognized a few of the fillies that were extras in "Seabiscuit" that came out a few years ago. And much like that movie that was uplifting during the time of the Great Depression, "Secretariat" also came out at a time when the country was embroiled over the Watergate scandal, the Vietnam War and those long lines at the gas pump.



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Heck, the way things are going now we could sure use another happy horse story now that'll be turned into a movie say 30 years from now?

Before I get started I promise not to incorporate lame horse racing terms to sound cute and witty. So many critics have done that this past week that they all sound like literary hacks and that's being kind, trust me. Some have been so bad it was like reading the equivalent of "Last Comic Standing" from someone who came in last place and decided to take up reviewing movies as a way to get noticed for their other, horrible deficiency of writing something.

Even though the title would suggest the horse as the main focal point it's really the people surrounding the star that makes the movie so worth seeing. As I mentioned, Diana Lane is so good as Penny Chenery Tweedy, Secretariat's owner that you know not only did she do her research well, but literally hung out with the still living Ms. Tweedy to get every nuance nailed to perfection. To say that this role was tailor made for Lane would be an understatement and even though it's still a little too early to predict I could see an Oscar nomination here in the Best Actress category.

Her character overcomes all odds and is driven to success never taking no for an answer even at the risk of losing the farm (literally) when her mother passes away and her dad

(played marvelously by Scott Glenn) is incapacitated. Lane's character becomes the driving force that makes everyone else's character fall into place.

One of the standout roles goes to John Melodic as the Secretariat's trainer, Lucien Lauren. Given the kind of roles Malkovich has had before I thought he was going to drug the horse, but then realized they were all on the same team (whew).



It's incredible thinking back that this horse would be a Triple Crown winner because I can still remember when the pundits doubted her winning one of the most grueling thoroughbred races. In an era of everything being 3-D in the animated and horror genres it really is refreshing to see a movie that shuns any special effects, but is compelling enough just on its story that one hopes more filmmakers will start focusing on all ages that want to see a movie that truly lifts the spirit. Kudos for director Randall

Wallace and writer Mike Rich (based on the book "Secretariat: The Making of a Champion" by William Nack) for making this project come to fruition. I know this is going to sound a little too sentimental to some, but I've always believes sports are a great metaphor for life, but when a horse can drive you to tears if you know the back-story and not just crossing the finish line, then you know you've just experienced a really good movie.

"Secretariat" is rated PG for brief mild language with a running time of two hours.

Howie Nave is host/emcee/manager of The Improv at Harveys. You can hear him Monday-Friday 6 to 10am on KRLT FM-93.9.