

Sydney White just a poisoned apple

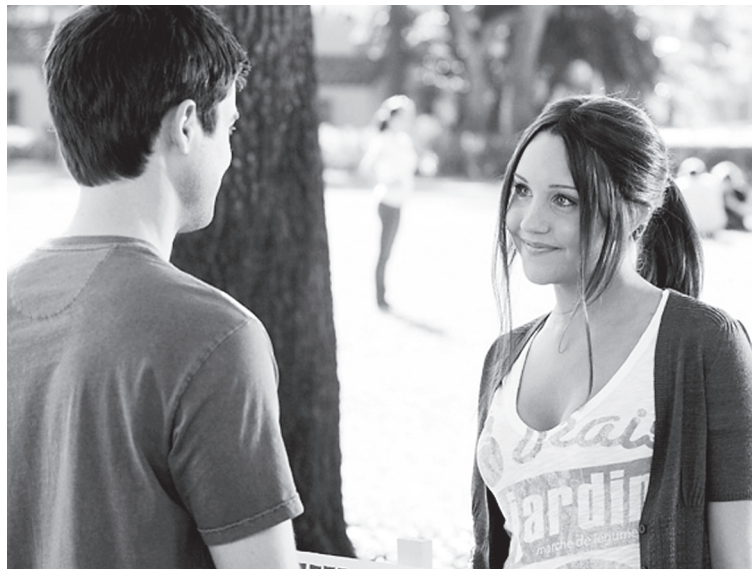
Bynes's latest adaptation is less Disney magic and more pure Hollywood suck

filmreview

Sydney White

Now Playing
Starring Amanda Bynes, Sara Paxton,
and Matt Long
Directed by Joe Nussbaum

BEN CARTER
Arts & Entertainment Staff



Who doesn't enjoy the occasional convoluted modern adaptation of a classic tale starring sexy young people partaking in sexy, fun adventures? In the film *Sydney White*, Amanda Bynes is the modern Snow White, this time at college in the United States. It seems likely that, in this case, the filmmakers were going for a fun *Van Wilder*-style college comedy, only for the younger, female crowd. Whether this flies with the adolescents remains to be seen, but everyone else would be good to avoid this trite, underwhelming, juvenile fare.

Bynes plays Sydney, a tomboy who was raised by her father after her mother's death. To honour her memory (surely there must have been better ways to go about this), she pledges at her college sorority, which by now is filled with dozens of generic, remarkably tan, blonde clones. Through her lack of social graces, she almost immediately makes an enemy of Rachel Witchburn (Sara Paxton), the ultra-blonde, ultra-evil sorority president. After she falls for Tyler Prince (Matt Long), fraternity do-gooder and Rachel's ex-boyfriend, she's tossed out and forced to take shelter at The Vortex, a ramshackle house home to seven of the nerdiest guys on campus.

We don't learn much about these guys, which is unfortunate, as they

seemed like the only people in this movie who weren't complete jerks. They are (names either not given or not necessary) science nerd, scouts nerd, fangoria nerd, foreign-exchange-student nerd (saddled with the devastating problem of an inconvenient sleep schedule), console-gaming nerd, nerd-with-allergies-who-also-happens-to-be-moderately-attractive-and-will-probably-get-laid-by-the-end, and ladies-man nerd, played appropriately by Samm Levine (of TV's *Freaks and Geeks*).

Bynes rallies the nerds to fight back against the greek-dominated system, and along the way teaches them important lessons about self-confidence, being proud of who you are, and some other just-as-obvious crap.

The movie proceeds and ends as we would expect: the "different" kids stand up for themselves; Bynes gets the guy; some of the nerds get girls; some get rich; and others wake up in the morning and sleep at night (a triumph

for some, I suppose.) There's little of significance along the way: a MySpace "hot or not" page substitutes for the queen's mirror, and Sydney is sent a poisoned Apple ... computer, the sort of joke that I'm certain seems much more clever to the dudes who wrote it than anyone else.

The most obvious parallel to *Sydney White* is Bynes' previous film, the light and entertaining *She's the Man*. Just like with other adaptations, when Shakespeare is your source material, it gives you a certain advantage (although an appearance by David Cross doesn't hurt). This film, however, is based on a fairy tale, probably the Disneyfied version.

It's easy to gloss over the imperfections in a film like this by pointing to its modest origins, but with such a low ceiling, an authentically entertaining result is only likely if all parties are on the same page and making an honest effort. Unfortunately, they aren't, and it doesn't take long to realize that *Sydney White* is just for the kids.

Silk far too wrapped up in itself

filmreview

Silk

Now Playing
Starring Michael Pitt, Keira Knightley,
and Alfred Molina
Directed by Francois Girard

JOEL TIEDEMANN
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Worldly travels, intense passion, and surprising betrayal all accompany Francois Girard's latest emotional rollercoaster of a film, *Silk*. With its slow pace and lack of immediate action, the film will have difficulty getting audiences to look past its plodding pacing to get to the emotional centre.

The script was originally a novel by Alessandro Baricco, later converted into a screenplay by Michael Golding, and director Francois Girard. *Silk* tells the story of a young Frenchman, Hervé Joncour (Michael Pitt), who must leave behind his beautiful wife (Keira Knightley) for long periods of time while travelling the world in search of silkworm eggs.

As the film progresses, Hervé's quests for healthy eggs become longer and more arduous; his town's economic welfare depends heavily on the silk trade. The young man is eventually prodded by his employer Baldabio (Alfred Molina) to make several trips to and from Japan in

order to strike up a new trade agreement. Upon his second voyage, Hervé becomes closer with some of the locals, and despite his strong marriage, some complex emotional bonds are formed.

Despite many back and forth travels across the world and an emotionally demanding plot, *Silk* trudges along at an absolutely sluggish pace.

In the end, Hervé's trips come to a halt as Japan falls into civil war, and his wife's health begins to deteriorate. The main plot isn't overly enticing, but the ending presents an interesting twist that may leave some viewers shocked.

Despite many back-and-forth travels across the globe and an emotionally demanding plot, *Silk* trudges along at an absolutely sluggish pace. At no point in the film were any scenes injected to alter the lethargic speed, and by the end, it seemed to be dragging on. Many scenes took an unnecessarily long amount of time to come to the main point and many are stuffed with mundane filler.

None of the acting was particularly notable and even Pitt, surprisingly, delivers a rather sleepy performance.

Knightley's performance was slightly stronger, though her character played a minor role overall.

One of the few positives in this movie is the cinematography. The scenes depicting far-off locales (Japan, Africa, Russia) are stunning, and the beauty of the natural landscapes captured in scenes is impressive. One such shot captured a forested hillside in Japan in the middle of a light snow. The serene beauty found in this particular scene is especially striking and will surely give audiences chills. Even the small French town that Hervé and his wife call home is remarkably scenic, and many specific details are recreated in order for the town to have an authentic, 19th-century look.

But unfortunately, beautiful cinematography isn't enough to save *Silk* from its own terrible pacing.

If you happen to possess the ability to slog through a film to get to its emotional core, then *Silk* may indeed be right for you. But if this doesn't sound appealing, a more immediately gratifying box-office selection might be a wiser choice. Prospective audiences should note that this is definitely a romantic film first and foremost, with any other attributes falling a distant second.

Despite breathtaking scenery from around the globe, *Silk*'s dawdling pace may leave viewers with a sense of indifference towards everything else in the movie.



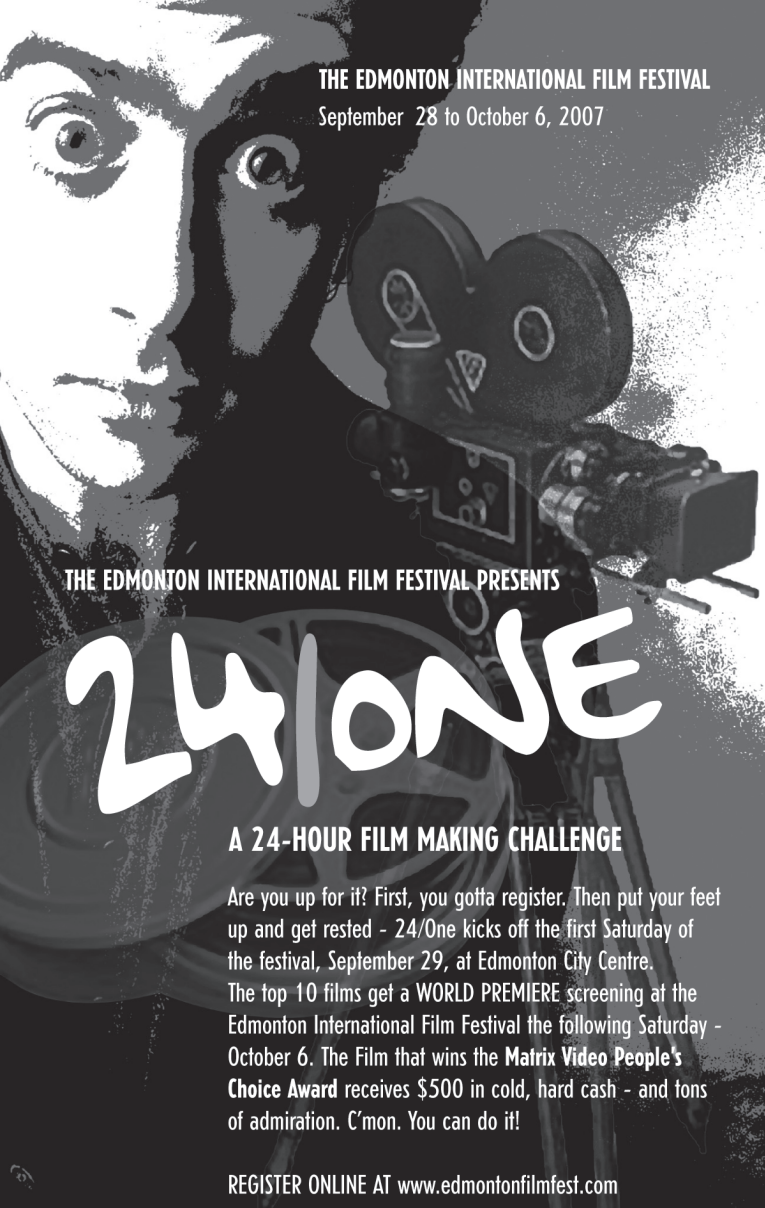

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