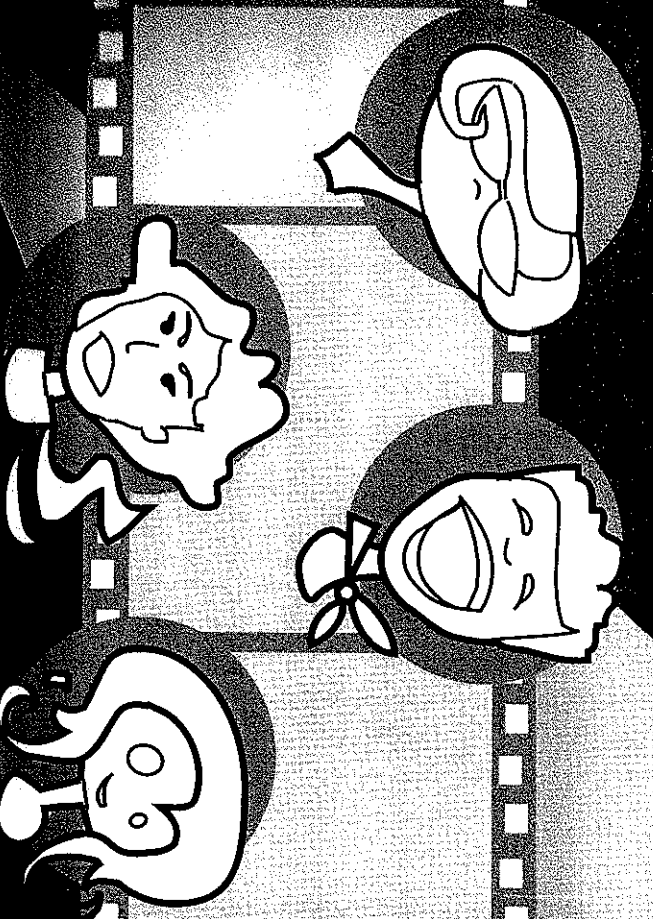


Girls

on

THE



Clare Bundy
Lise Carrigg
Sibyl Goldman
Andrea Pyros



HarperPerennial
A Division of HarperCollins Publishers

Ryan and Tom Hanks. Now, if you think Ryan and Hanks live up to the legacy of Margaret Sullavan and Jimmy Stewart, more power to you. But I think I'll pass on that one and just stay at home, sip some champagne, and slip into the light, courtly world of old-time comedy.



THE FASTEST WAY TO MY HEART ...

By Andrea

During my high school years, I tended to fall for the “rebel without a cause” type of guys. They were surly. They smoked cigarettes. They wore dark colors. They were strong, they were silent, some might say they veered toward the sullen.

Being with them was like pulling teeth, but I persevered. I believed that their behavior was masking depth, wisdom, and a shy, timid little heart yearning to burst free and love someone just like me. Uh-huh. Right.

In my very last week of my very last year of high school, I attended a party with a bunch of the students who worked on the school newspaper. They were kinda nerdy. I mean that in the best way: They were witty, irreverent, willing to poke a little fun at themselves, willing to act silly, have a good time. They made me laugh, they brought out the best in me, and best of all, I felt like I could be myself with them, not having to pretend to be cooler-than-thou. I went home and kicked myself repeatedly, hard, for not noticing these people until it was too late.

Now, I'm the world's biggest sucker for a person who provides some serious laughs. One time I threw myself (humiliatingly) at a



INSTANT PARTY MOVIES

Aladdin

Austin Powers

Beat Girl

Beetlejuice

The Big Lebowski

House Party

Rush Hour

Strictly Ballroom

Swingers

Velvet Goldmine

Canadian stand-up comic I'd met through work. The guy wasn't afraid to wear strangely patterned clothes, or to work in clubs called "Chuckle's House of Yuk Yuks." Still, he was super sexy because he was so hilarious. Sadly, he had other plans for spending his leisure time. Besides his having a girlfriend, I think the crazed look in my eyes when I asked him to tell the one again about how he just flew in from the coast (and, boy, are his arms tired) got him sorta nervous.

Oh, well.

The one place we can always satisfy a comedy craving is in the movies. There's a lovin' spoonful of wonderful performances out there from people who have cracked us up and therefore become the recipients of our affections. Whether it be Clare's

love of Meg Ryan (of the romantic-comedy oeuvre—check out her ode in the Romance Films chapter), Lise's affection for Bill Murray, or Sibyl's appreciation for the tall, gangly, jug-eared Jeff Goldblum, all of us have fallen for people because they make us laugh.

Here are some of the sexiest funny performances around:

JOAN CUSACK IN *IN AND OUT* (dir. Frank Oz, 1997) Emily Montgomery could have been an awful role. A faithful fiancée discovers that her lover is gay, after waiting years for him to marry her? And nada nookie that whole time? Urk! However, the talented Cusack pulls off the role with aplomb, causing the audience to totally fall for her, especially when she freaks out in her puffy wedding dress.

BENIC

(1995)

of thi
manc
heavy
away

JOHN

Good
glasse
lifesty
he ca
Girls

CARY

Cary
so go
new s
Whoc
son lo
house
dear

HOLLY

Hunte
out al
the TI
daugh
her at
some

MIKE

(dir. Ja
this si

BENICIO DEL TORO IN *THE USUAL SUSPECTS* (dir. Bryan Singer, 1995) Comedy is not the word that comes to mind when you think of this elaborately plotted thriller, but Benicio Del Toro's performance in this flick was true comic genius. Playing a mumbling, heavy-lidded crook, Del Toro almost managed to steal this picture away from the rest of the killer cast (forgive the pun).

JOHN GOODMAN IN *THE BIG LEBOWSKI* (dir. Joel Coen, 1998) Goodman's Walter is a Vietnam vet who sports Ambervision sunglasses, wields a wicked temper, and lives a devout Orthodox Jewish lifestyle in this wacky Coen brothers flick. His explanation of why he can't go out on Friday nights ("Shomo fucking Shabas!") had all us Girls in stitches for about a month.

CARY GRANT IN *ARSENIC AND OLD LACE* (dir. Frank Capra, 1944) Cary Grant is the ultimate sexy leading man, but rarely has he been so goofy as in this cute classic, playing a man leaving town with his new sweetie, who first stops in to wish adieu to his beloved aunties. Whoopsie! Turns out these sweet old ladies have a tendency to poison lonely men (mercy killing, they say) and bury them around the house, and Grant twists himself into a pretzel trying to protect the dear old biddies when he finds out their sinister secret.

HOLLY HUNTER IN *HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS* (dir. Jodie Foster, 1995) Hunter's Claudia rules; she is my idol. During this flick, she freaks out about ninety-seven times while at home visiting her family for the Thanksgiving holiday, degenerating into her usual dysfunctional daughter role perfectly. What I have always liked about Hunter is her ability to seem like a real person, albeit a really crazy person sometimes, and here she is at her most awesome and adorable.

MIKE MYERS IN *AUSTIN POWERS: INTERNATIONAL MAN OF MYSTERY* (dir. Jay Roach, 1997) The shagadelic Mike Myers wrote and stars in this silly spy-thriller spoof, and his adorableness runs free playing

Austin Powers, an out-of-touch secret agent. The opening sequence, with him doing a dance through swinging London, is terrific, as is the supporting role his rocking chest hair plays. Yeah, baby!

LESLIE NIELSEN IN AIRPLANE! (dir. Jim Abrahams, David Zucker, Jerry Zucker, 1980) Swoon. Leslie Nielsen's Dr. Rumack is perfectly ridiculous, right in keeping with the rest of this brilliant, way juvenile spoof. Everything he does, from wearing his stethoscope at all times to replying to someone who says "Surely you're joking," that he's serious, "and don't call me Shirley," is adorable. It takes a tough man to make a tender comedy.

RICHARD PRYOR IN STIR CRAZY (dir. Sidney Poitier, 1980) Richard Pryor is one of those people who can make even the smallest little throwaway stuff funny, always, and particularly in this goofy flick about two totally nice guys who are thrown in the pokey for a crime they didn't commit. My fave scene is when Pryor struts down a prison hallway with the equally dorky-looking Gene Wilder by his side, trying to look tough: "That's right, that's right, we bad, we bad." I particularly love how warmly he acts toward Wilder, both on a character level and as far as not hogging the limelight. Cool.

CHRISTIAN SLATER IN HEATHERS (dir. Michael Lehmann, 1989) Christian Slater channels Jack Nicholson here as a rebellious teen who convinces popular girl Winona Ryder that the world is a better place without her bitchy friends in **Heathers**. In fact, I fell for my first serious boyfriend because he reminded me of Slater here. Dark, twisted, yum, just the way I like 'em.

So there you are. Plenty of funny fish in the sea. Which leads me to the moral of this story: If you want to have serious dating success, perhaps you would be wise to spend time working on your funny bone, not on your pecs.



1 **AIRP**

Every
plane
can f
every
gonz
Kare

2 **ANN**

to W
come
off-a
cled
fines
polit
year

3 **AUS**

(dir.)
Bond
thro
shag
Evil.

4 **CAT**

Murr
club,
expl
ball,
thou
Mag
pries



ALL I REALLY NEED TO KNOW I LEARNED FROM WATCHING HALLOWEEN

By Andrea

Clare's obsessed with her Beelzebub watch and Lise needs to go back two decades to find something that scares her. What is wrong with this picture? Don't these girls know that the world is filled with ax murderers, that madmen are lurking in closets with hunting knives as we speak? That we should all be at the ready, armed with the knowledge garnered by studying the methods of the mass murderers who walk among us?!

Sheesh.

Well, what do they know, anyway? They haven't been researching this for as long as I have.

The year I turned eleven, the research began. That was the year my two best friends and I entered into our very own twilight zone. Every Friday, like three zombies, Kate, Bev, and I would head for the local video store, Video Vault, where the clerks would put plastic bags on top of their heads and try to sell them to us as "hats." We wouldn't buy the, ahem, hats, but we would rent scads of horror movies.

We started with the classics of the genre, such as the killer who stalks nubile baby-sitters in **Halloween** (dir. John Carpenter, 1978) and the killer who stalks nubile camp counselors in **Friday the 13th** (dir. Sean S. Cunningham, 1980), but soon we'd exhausted the quality picks and were delving into the lowest caliber fare. We saw **Happy Birthday to Me** (dir. J. Lee Thompson, 1981), featuring Melissa Sue Anderson from *Little House on the Prairie* as a girl flipping out after an accident. In this cinematic masterpiece, one guy gets butchered while lifting weights, and someone else gets a shish

kebab sti
William I
tims. By
eyes, we
ried an "

On
ing film e
boscare
mouth to
came ou
(lightly, c
get her b
gasped f
shock, w
Bev, only
buried u
screamir

Sir
sound sc
you won
that we
years sca
and man
wrestlin
active in
Clare an
killer lur
way mor
scarred.

I g
as I once
with his

kebab stick rammed down his throat. We gaped at **Maniac** (dir. William Lustig, 1980), about a psychotic killer who scalps his victims. By the by, we innocent little girls, the apples of our parents' eyes, were particularly excited to read on the box that the flick carried an "X" rating because of the level of gore. Woo-hoo!

One particularly horrifying film ended with such a turboscare that Kate opened her mouth to scream, but no sound came out. I had to slap her (lightly, okay?) on the cheek to get her breathing again. As we gasped for air, shaking from shock, we looked around for Bev, only to find that she was buried under the covers, screaming for help.

Since these experiences sound so pleasurable, I know you won't be surprised to learn that we spent the next two years scaring ourselves silly, and many years after that wrestling with our wildly overactive imaginations (a trait Clare and I share) and our fears of a very strong, very psychotic killer lurking in the shadows (a trait Clare and I don't share—she's way more concerned with ghosts and spirits). I was permanently scarred. We were all permanently scarred.

I grew older. I started to breathe easy, no longer as confident as I once was that every noise was someone clawing at the walls with his razor nails, à la Freddy Krueger. I began to sleep well again.



AN ABSURD PLOTLINE

LISE: *Child's Play*. "I'm Chucky, wanna play?" No, go away, freak.

SIBYL: *Tremors*. Killer worms. Yeah, right.

ANDREA: I'm going with the crazed green Irish imp plotline of *Leprechaun*.

CLARE: I laughed so hard I nearly vomited when Andrea and I watched *Phantasm*, with those little dwarf dudes running around and that ball that sucks people's brains out.

And I thought to myself that maybe everything was going to be okay.

As if they were a dim, distant, shameful part of my past, I discontinued my research, and stayed away from these slasher flicks for a very long time—until I was handed the assignment to review **Scream** (dir. Wes Craven, 1996) for Girls on Film. “Why not?” I thought. “This looks fun, and besides, I’m not that little girl anymore. I can face my fears.”

I went solo to see **Scream**, and I left the screening room in shock. How could I ever have turned away from these movies? This wasn’t some weird childhood obsession with scaring myself in order to work out preadolescent angst. Oh, no, I was just preternaturally aware at a young age of the threats out there, and what I had to do to protect myself. By gum, these films are the only known way we have to learn the customs of the serial killer (similar to the way you need to watch a Dracula movie to find out the key points about the garlic/crucifix/vampire-can’t-come-in-unless-you-invite-him-in stuff). There’s a method to the serial killer’s madness, and the best place to learn that method is in the movies.

Halloween is probably the most apt serial-killer/crazy-maniac handbook. If you study only one film for your own research, it should be this one, and then you’re good to go. Scoff not. If you want to safeguard yourself and your loved ones from pure evil (Clare, you can defend yourself! Never fear!), then you’d better bone up. What did I learn from **Halloween**? What can I impart to you?

First of all, it is important to note, as Laurie (Jamie Lee Curtis) does in **Halloween**, that there is, in fact, a bogeyman. This is important. As your mother might have said, if you ignore the realities of life, life is going to bite you in the ass. Actually, she probably didn’t say that. But I did. If you ignore the threat of the killer, then it is very likely that the killer will come after you first because you’re

such a ch
should ne
dark roo

(Of
these litt
snark wis
asking fo

Sec
ingly resil
back from
Myers, th
gets poke
with a co
lives. Less
toe with
around kr
lessons. K

This
as ungrac
to ward h
gotta go
ety’s seria
Sigh. Skip
croquet n

Wha
times, doi
holy, don’
You know

No. I
ing of the
be sorry. F
notes.

such a chumpola. Remember in **Scream** how they kept saying you should never yell out "I'll be right back" as you walk backward into a dark room? Well, point taken!

(Oh, I know, the other point is that **Scream** made fun of all these little serial killer rules, which is fine if you're some hipster snark wiseass, but honestly, I think it's really dumb, because hubris = asking for it. But enough about that.)

Second, the bogeyman is very strong, very clever, and surprisingly resilient. He is hard to kill, and even if you kill him, he comes back from the dead somehow by sheer force of his evilness. Michael Myers, the young chap who stalks Laurie throughout **Halloween**, gets poked in the neck with a knitting needle, stabbed in the eye with a coat hanger, and shot. Repeatedly. With a gun. Yet still he lives. Lesson here: It's good to be prepared at all times to go toe-to-toe with a very strong person. Travel in crews. Pack heat. Carry around knitting needles, rope, perhaps a dash of arsenic. Take karate lessons. Kick ass like Buffy the Vampire Slayer.

Third, said killer likes young, attractive people. So try to age as ungracefully as possible so he'll steer clear of you. Don't even try to ward him off with a wacky hat or a Twisted Sister T-shirt—you gotta go whole hog. You have to look awful. Sadly, even our society's serial killers have tweaked views of beauty and body image. Sigh. Skip the lipstick, work on your ability to nail people with a croquet mallet instead.

What else can I offer you? Oh, nothing fancy. Stay alert at all times, don't sleep, do not have sex, and for the love of all that is holy, don't ever play "(Don't Fear) the Reaper" by Blue Öyster Cult. You know, the usual sensible precautions.

No need to worry, it's just that the warning bell of the dawning of the apocalypse is ringing, and if you don't listen to it, you'll be sorry. Remain calm, rent **Halloween**, and don't forget to take notes.

that really convey a wider array of experiences (sadly, though, I must point out the dearth of good films about minority teens, with **Boyz N the Hood** being a noteworthy exception), put the John Hughes collection aside, and look for some directors who recently experienced some of said crap. Watch for Tamara Jenkins, the director of the semi-autobiographical 1998 film, **Slums of Beverly Hills**, and Lisa Krueger, the director of the seriously underrated **Manny and Lo**.

Let's face it: Unless you actually are Molly Ringwald, you probably didn't make it through the teen years without a few bumps and scrapes, and maybe even a wicked bad perm like mine. In fact, maybe I will write, direct, produce, and edit a film on teen angst, all about me and my hideous wardrobe. Clare? Andrea!? Sibyl!?! Will somebody puh-lease get my agent on the phone?

What's that? I don't have an agent? Rats.



LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX, BABY

By Andrea

My college boyfriend (let's call him Fred, to protect the innocent) once told me a story about his high school girlfriend. Seems that Fred dated this girl for eight months. During their entire time together, they made out exactly once, right at the beginning of their relationship. After that, they got into the charming pattern of going to parties, where Fred would spend his evening chasing her around, his finger down his throat, in an attempt to throw up on her. Yes, this is a true story. No joke.

Aside from the fact that this guy, um, Fred, obviously had some intimacy issues, I always thought this story was a good example of the nadir of teen behavior in the face of the megatrauma of



WHAT I HATE MOST ABOUT *RISKY BUSINESS* IS ...

LISE: That scene with Tom Cruise dancing in his tighties. It's repulsive. And that song is awful.

SIBYL: Tom Cruise's hair, and of course his smugiliciousness.

ANDREA: Tom Cruise's annoying sweaters. Rebecca De Mornay's annoying pout. Every moment when that guy playing the annoying pimp is on-screen.

CLARE: That stupid line, "Sometimes you just gotta say, 'What the fuck?'" It became the credo for a generation of assholes.

right answer was. Was she supposed to be "a virgin?" Was that good? Bad? *Eek!*

As an adult, I look back on that era and just thank the heavens that I'm no longer going through all that angst and insecurity. However, I still like to watch films about teens, and now that I am at this nice, safe distance of adulthood, I can sympathize with all the awful stuff the kids are going through, yet be far, far away from the

emerging sexuality. Fred wasn't ready to be in a sexual relationship, but he definitely couldn't admit to that—not to himself, his friends, or his poor, long-suffering girlfriend who had no idea why her guy was so crazy.

And even when we're itty-bitty, we're already all confused and freaked out about what sex is, and what it's supposed to be, and what we're supposed to be doing. Lise was in elementary school when some older junior high guys were giving her a hard time, saying, "Hey, are you a virgin? You must be a virgin." Poor Lise got all confused and flustered. Not only was she not 100 percent sure what it was to be "a virgin," she wasn't sure what the

worst of it all. I? Am I ever going to be right in the m

There a tongue-in-cheek sex and dating interesting a icum of reali. **Candles**) or James Foley,

In the were about Why? No idea up in a true ally manage and direct t centers on: yep, you go Along the v been clear heinous. St

A year let me die Brickman, get that sn (Product p seem to be launched in public. part-sport Ivy League the same

worst of it all. I remember the Will I or won't I? Should I or shouldn't I? Am I ever going to or not, for the love of God??!?!? But now I'm not right in the middle of it anymore, thank you higher power.

There are different ways that teen films portray sex. Some are tongue-in-cheek, plenty are just stupid and gross, others try to treat sex and dating with some seriousness. The teen films I find most interesting are those that deal with the issues with at least a modicum of realism, whether adding a certain levity (**Sixteen Candles**) or by exploring some of the scarier aspects (**Fear**, dir. James Foley, 1996).

In the eighties, there seemed to be a whole slew of films that were about teenage boys trying desperately to lose their virginity. Why? No idea. The whole trend was kind of weird. Tom Cruise pops up in a true bowser called **Losin' It** (dir. Curtis Hanson—who actually managed to claw himself out of this shitpile of his own making and direct the amazing **L.A. Confidential**—1982). The entire film centers on a group of buddies who head off to Tijuana to try to, yep, you got it, unload that monkey called virginity off their backs. Along the way they meet Shelley Long from *Cheers*. If I haven't been clear enough, I'm saying it loud and proud: This flick is heinous. Still, it is part of an oeuvre.

A year later, Cruise showed up in another “please God don't let me die a virgin” film entitled **Risky Business** (dir. Paul Brickman, 1983). This flick really cemented his career. Who can forget that snappy dance he did in his skivvies, sporting Ray-Bans? (Product placement? You be the judge.) Me and the other Girls seem to be the only people who didn't like this film, by the way. It launched every schlub and his brother into the world of lip-syncing in public. The whole movie seems dated and annoying, with center-part-sporting Cruise playing a little snot-nose trying to get into an Ivy League school and romance a prostitute (Rebecca DeMornay) at the same time. Sometimes you just gotta say “overrated.”

You might think that films with young girls being sexually active were a lot more serious and thoughtful than those with boys in the lead. Boys were in films like **Losin' It**, or **Porky's**, set in the 1950s about a bunch of guys in Florida who schlep around some brothel trying to get laid.

Girls, on the other hand, wound up having to actually deal with the repercussions of their sexuality. In **Baby It's You** (dir. John Sayles, 1982), Rosanna Arquette and Vincent Spano star as two kids from totally different backgrounds who fall for each other; it's a film I remember finding upsetting as a young girl, since the two leads obviously care about each other, yet grow apart as they mature.

Just as Sayles's heroine didn't have such an easy time of it, neither did Jennifer Jason Leigh in **Fast Times at Ridgemont High** (dir. Amy Heckerling, 1982). Leigh's character loses her virginity, and the experience sucks. Then she has sex with someone else, and gets pregnant. Plus the guy who got her pregnant didn't even have the guts to pick her up after the abortion! Lame, lame, lame! At the end, she realizes she has a great friend and she finds a super nice guy who treats her well, so that was cool, but she had some serious bumps along the way.

However, if you dig a little deeper, you'll see that there are plenty of teen flicks with male leads where the protagonists have a wide range of human emotions, and the topic of sexuality is treated with respect. Basically, this confirms my theory that a well-made film can carry any of us along, whether we share the same gender/race/orientation as the protagonist or not. I felt for and identified with poor John Cusack in **Say Anything**, especially in the scene where he missed Lone Skye so much that he stood in the rain outside her house, and I still remember weeping at the end of **The Last American Virgin**, because the sweet hero was just so heartbroken. Ack.

One of my personal fave teen films of the nineties has got to be **Fear** (dir. James Foley, 1996), because it really shows that teenage girls

are deal
get babi
bodies a
approac
film del
Marky M
Cc
Little D
realistic
Set at a
two poli
see whic
totally c
about se
know a t
(though
and easy
Ov
Sometin
is missin
Regardle
teens de
rest of u
out there
to stand
more ask
guy's pla
being alc
around w
Urr

ially
with boys
it in the
ome

deal with
ohn
vo kids
it's a film
eads
ure.
it, nei-
High (dir.
d the
ts preg-
uts to
he real-
reats her
the way.
e are
s have a
; treated
made

and
lly in
l in the
end of
ust so

got to be
age girls

are dealt with so awkwardly by the adults in their lives. Either they get babied like they're still teeny weeny little girls, or, because their bodies are fully developed, they get treated as sex objects. Neither approach is too helpful for their emotional development. Sadly, this film delves into pulp toward the end, so this theme is dropped while Marky Mark overacts and trashes everything in his path.

Contrary to what you might expect, the tacky and dated **Little Darlings** (dir. Ronald F. Maxwell, 1980) is one of the more realistic portrayals of teenage girls I've seen in a Hollywood flick. Set at a summer camp, it stars Kristy McNichol and Tatum O'Neal as two polar opposites who somehow get roped into competing to see which of them will lose their virginity first. Their bunkmates are totally catty, cliquey, and peer-pressurey. All realistic. They also talk about sex a ton, feigning bravado, even though most of them don't know a thing about sex or boys. Ouch, this film is totally brutal, (though at least not all the men in it are dogs—that's such a cheap and easy way out of gender issues).

Overall, I'm with Lise: I think it's cool to keep it real. Sometimes a more meaty flick can offer a perspective that perhaps is missing from those Corey Haim/Corey Feldman classics. Regardless of where your teen movie desires take you, for sure teens deserve films that treat them with the same respect that the rest of us are given. There's enough mythology and misinformation out there that when a film tries to do the topic justice, I just want to stand up and cheer! No more soft lighting! No more candles! No more asking your friend Bev to come spend the night with you at a guy's place so you won't have to deal with the consequences of being alone with him and having to tell him you don't want to fool around with him!

Um, not that I ever did that.