

FILM REVIEWS

Love Field

(Drama—Color)

An Orion release of a Sanford/Pillsbury production. Produced by Sarah Pillsbury, Midge Sanford. Executive producers, George Goodman, Kate Guinzburg. Coproducer, Don Roos. Directed by Jonathan Kaplan. Screenplay, Roos. Camera (Technicolor; DeLuxe prints), Ralf Bode; editor, Jane Kurson; music, Jerry Goldsmith; production design, Mark Freeborn; art direction, David Willson, Lance King; set decoration, Jim Erickson; costume design, Peter Mitchell; Michelle Pfeiffer's costume design, Colleen Atwood; sound (Dolby), Glen Anderson; associate producer, Sulla Hamer; assistant director, Tom Davies; second unit director, Bode; casting, Julie Selzer, Sally Dennison. Reviewed at the Orion screening room, L.A., Nov. 12, 1992. MPAA Rating: R. Running time: 104 min.

Lurene Hallett Michelle Pfeiffer
 Paul Cater Dennis Haysbert
 Jonell Stephanie McFadden
 Ray Hallett Brian Kerwin
 Mrs. Enright Louise Latham
 Mrs. Heisenbittal Peggy Rea
 Hazel Beth Grant

After sitting on the shelf for well over a year during Orion's bankruptcy woes, "Love Field" emerges as a bitersweet reminder of the company's knack for nurturing interesting, thoughtful character pieces without necessarily having a strong marketing angle. Strong marketing, however, is exactly what this sincere, not fully realized 1960s period drama will need. Pic is being slipped into year-end L.A. and N.Y. release in hopes of snaring an Academy Award nomination for Michelle Pfeiffer's flashy performance.

Failing an Oscar score, film should have only a modest theatrical run, but might be a pleasant video and cable item.

Yet another variation on the "where were you when you heard that Kennedy was shot" theme, story introduces Lurene Hallett (Pfeiffer), a rather dim but well-intentioned Dallas hairdresser with 100-watt bright platinum coif who imagines a kinship with Jacqueline Kennedy, since both lost infant children.

Failing to shake the first lady's hand—due to a clumsy plot contrivance—at the eponymous Dallas airport, Lurene heads off to work while tragic history unfolds. Film spares viewers the assassination footage, moving quickly to the oft repeated but always wrenching footage of Walter Cronkite reporting Kennedy's death.

Against her husband's (Brian Kerwin) wishes, Lurene hops a Greyhound north to attend the state funeral. On board she meets and gradually befriends a "Negro" man Paul (Dennis Haysbert) with something to hide. With Paul is his traumatized young daughter Jonell (Stephanie McFadden). Through a series of blunders by hapless Lurene, the trio is thrown together and must fend for themselves in the all-too-predictable American South.

The growing attraction between Lurene and Paul, while no surprise, is delicately handled. But it defies reason that any black man on the run would hook up with a woman with a beacon on her head. Third



Michelle Pfeiffer, on her way to J.F.K.'s funeral, becomes embroiled in the lives of Stephanie McFadden and Dennis Haysbert in "Love Field."

act disintegrates into a series of incredulous plot turns, one of which requires the long-suffering husband to suddenly emerge as a full-fledged redneck.

'Don Roos' screenplay struggles to tie together some of the loose strands of mid-'60s American history—the fall of Camelot, the nascent Civil Rights movement, the birth of feminism—but never quite coalesces.

The parts are, however, more rewarding than the whole. Jonathan Kaplan's direction is careful and well-paced. It lacks an essential tension—too many scenes are given equal weight—but never drags, thanks in part to Jane Kurson's superior, unobtrusive editing.

Pfeiffer notches yet another memorable characterization, although her attempt at defining a-not-terribly-bright woman skirts condescension.

Haysbert, in a role which Denzel Washington departed over "creative differences," is solid and likable, but the role needed more gradation—he's asked to pluck the same, quietly exasperated chord one too many times.

The real find is 6-year-old McFadden, in her acting debut. With only a few lines, she heartbreakingly telegraphs volumes of emotional distress with her expressive countenance. Kaplan deserves credit for never letting her lapse into an animated Keane painting.

Technically the film is aces. Ralf Bode's cinematography is rich and evocative, yet realistic. Colleen Atwood deserves special mention for her Jackie Kennedy-style outfits for Pfeiffer. Jerry Goldsmith did the astutely judged score.

—Richard Natale

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