

Contrived script dooms 'Love

By David Kronke
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For those still keeping score, here's a Kennedy movie update: Oliver Stone's "JFK" was based on Jim Marrs' book "Crossfire" and Jim Garrison's book "On the Trail of the Assassins." The muddled "Ruby" was based on a play titled "Love Field."

The movie "Love Field," on the

other hand, is based on nothing. And it shows.

REVIEW

Kennedy's assassination serves as a completely spurious motivation to kick the story into gear in "Love Field," but it's really not used credibly, nor does it give the film any sense of persuasive atmosphere. Nov. 23, 1963, is used, primarily and perversely, to

spruce up the film's surroundings, to add a metaphoric resonance to the proceedings that the movie itself never earns.

Michelle Pfeiffer, nearly unrecognizable in her platinum '60s coif, stars as Lurene, a garrulous, bored Dallas housewife who lives a thoroughly unexamined existence.

Lurene's taken up with the Camelot mystique, not apparently because she embraces Kennedy's idealism and domestic policy, but simply because she really digs Jackie's outfits and accessories. She heads to the Dallas airport — the Love Field of the title — to greet the Kennedys as they land on that fateful Friday, but misses out on her chance to shake hands with them because the nattering old woman accompanying her misplaces her handbag.

Field' performances

THE FACTS

- **The film:** "Love Field" (R).
- **The stars:** Michelle Pfeiffer, Dennis Haysbert.
- **Behind the scenes:** Directed by Jonathan Kaplan. Written by Don Roos. Produced by Sarah Pillsbury, Midge Sanford. Released by Orion.
- **Running time:** One hour, 40 minutes.
- **Playing:** AMC Century 14, Century City.
- **Our rating:** ★

After Kennedy is shot, Lurene frets over what Jackie must be thinking. She decides to head up to Washington for the funeral, and maybe to swap fashion tips with Jackie afterward.

And director Jonathan Kaplan

("Unlawful Entry") leaves the driving to the loopy script by Don Roos ("Single White Female"), which effectively wrecks the entire enterprise. "Love Field" becomes an aimless and contrived road picture about Lurene's burgeoning relationship with Paul (Dennis Haysbert), an African-American who has illegally removed his daughter from a foster home.

There's no point condemning Pfeiffer, who almost completely disappears into her role. The problem is simply that Lurene is written as a cartoon character tossed into the midst of tragedy, then asked to grow when her personality leaves no room for such emotional maturity.

"Love Field," which has been sitting around wrapped up in Orion Pictures' bankruptcy red tape, is the first release since the studio's reorganization, and comes out briefly now simply to accommodate an Oscar nomination campaign for Pfeiffer. Only in a year with such slim pickings for actresses would this movie have a chance.