

New movie offers Beautiful surprise



Photo special to The Gamecock

Timothy Hutton (L) and Annabeth Gish (R) star in Ted Demme's "Beautiful Girls."

LIGHTS! CAMERA! REACTION!

CATHERINE McINTOSH Staff Writer

BEAUTIFUL GIRLS

★★★ (out of four stars)

I have to admit I am a person whose soul was forever marked by "The Outsiders," such that whenever a new movie with Matt Dillon comes out, I have to see it.

Okay, maybe it wasn't my soul that was marked but my pituitary gland. But you don't have to be a Matt Dillon fan to want to see Director Ted Demme's new movie "Beautiful Girls."

You could be an Uma Thurman fan, or a Rosie O'Donnell fan, or a Timothy Hutton fan. (Does he really have any?) Or maybe you're a fan of MIRAMAX films in general, since that studio has a habit of putting out really good movies like "Cinema Paradiso," "Drugstore Cowboy," "Pulp Fiction," and "Reservoir Dogs."

The name "Beautiful Girls" is somewhat misleading since the heart of the story is seen from a male perspective.

Willy, played by Timothy Hutton, is a piano player in a tiki lounge in New York City, the only one of his high school

buddies who has left their sleepy hometown. He returns to Knight's Ridge, Mass., for their 10-year high school reunion and finds that his friends are having the same kind of difficulty he has in making decisions about the women in their lives. A good part of the movie is a veiled philosophical discussion on the difference between growing old and growing up.

Paul, played by Michael Rapaport, ("True Romance," "Mighty Aphrodite") is a guy so obsessed with supermodels that he names his Saint Bernard Elle Macpherson.

He calls his girlfriend a hypocrite when she dumps him for a meat-cutter because she's vegetarian. Of all the characters, Paul seems to see his situation in the most desperate terms, even developing a theory that a beautiful girl brings promise and hope to a crappy life.

Rosie O'Donnell's character hits the nail on the head when she says the reason Paul or any other guy can't commit is that they think one of the Penthouse models is always waiting, just around the corner.

Matt Dillon is Tommy, "Birdman," who was the king of the hill in high school but has just come to the realization

that life has not turned out to be anything like he thought it would be. He tries to recapture some of his glory days by sleeping with his high school girlfriend (Lauren Holly), even though it jeopardizes the relationship he has with Sharon, played by Mira Sorvino, who was just nominated for an Oscar as Best Supporting Actress for her role in Woody Allen's new movie, "Mighty Aphrodite."

The most brilliant performance of the movie is given by the young Natalie Portman ("The Professional"). She plays Marty, Willy's 13-year-old neighbor, who makes the most penetrating and poetic observations of human nature since Shakespeare.

The thought of the kind of a woman Marty will become mesmerizes Willy to the point that he's actually jealous of the now short and scrawny boys that will get to be there when it happens.

This unexpected love story that never really happens gives the film a nice slant. In life, it seems like the unexpected is what usually comes along while we wait for our expectations of life to fulfill themselves — but they don't.

Life should be lived consciously, and the awakening that each of the characters go through near the end of the film proves that point.

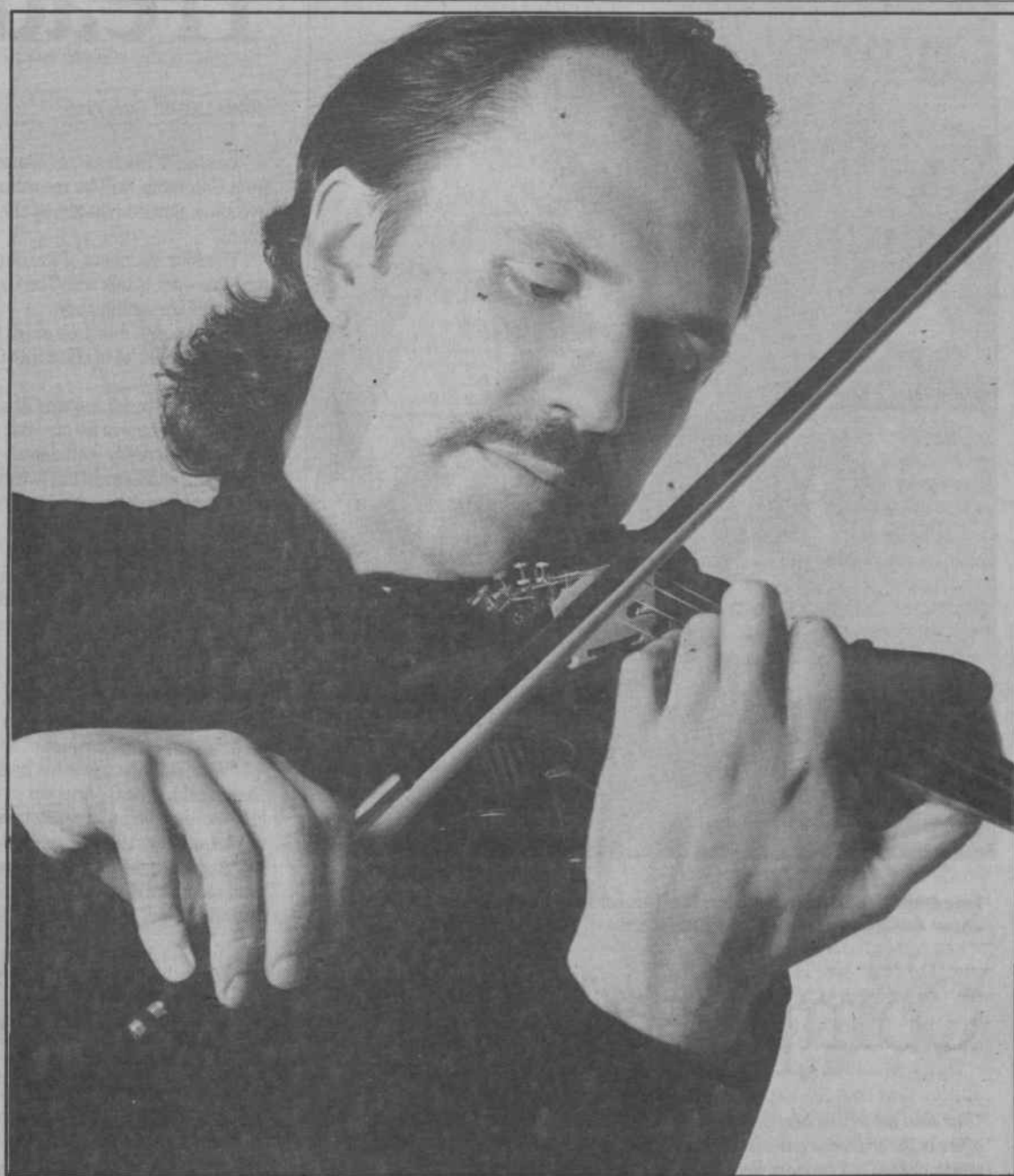


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Country Music's "Musician of the Year," Mark O'Connor, will be performing his "Fiddle Concerto" at the Koger Center tonight at 7:30. O'Connor, who will also be performing the music of Alberto Ginastera and Stephen Paulus, has won "Musician of the Year" five consecutive years. Tickets for the event are available at the Coliseum box office, all outlets and in the Koger Center lobby before the concert. Tickets cost \$6 for students, \$9 for seniors, USC faculty and staff and \$12 for the public. For more information, contact Zane Knauss at 782-9724.

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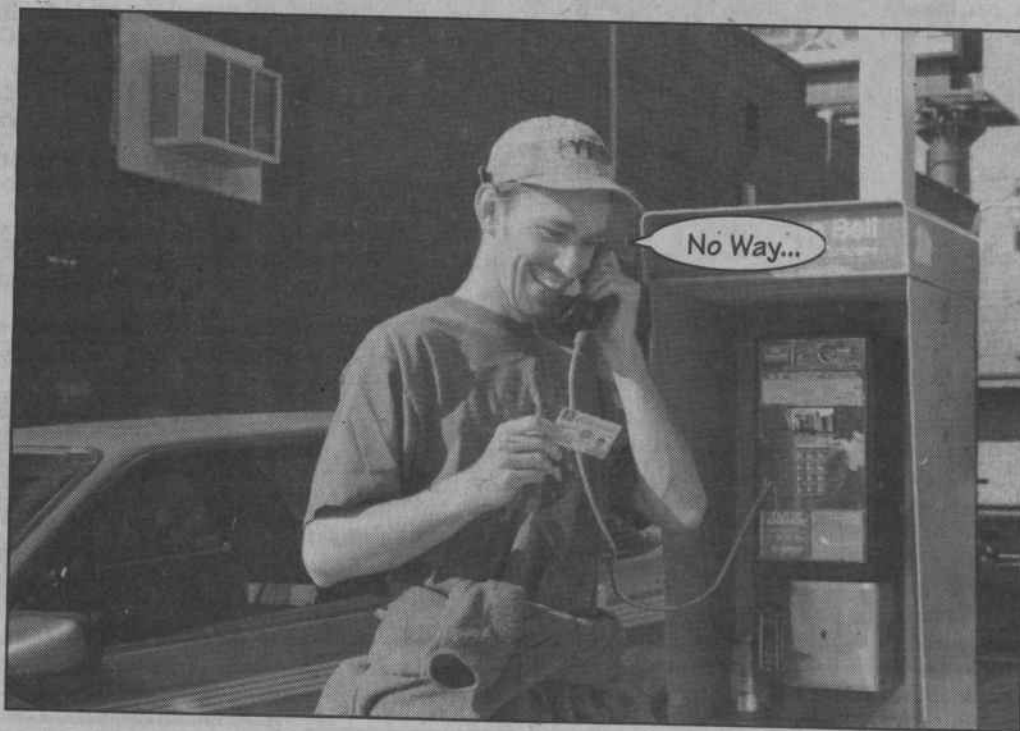
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