

Movie Review: 'Lucky You'

by David_Elliott

"Lucky You" has (lucky us) Drew Barrymore, now looking more woman than girl, yet still the cutest star on fizzy tap, still a honey of charm, still graced by that glorious chin.

'LUCKY YOU' - Drew Barrymore and Eric Bana try to beat the odds in the romantic drama 'Lucky You.' CNS Photo courtesy of Merie W. Wallace. But "Lucky You" is a Barrymore film sort of like "The Hustler" was a Piper Laurie picture. Both films are about the preening rivalry of two guys. Eric Bana is Las Vegas poker prince Huck Cheever (hustler Paul Newman played pool), and Robert Duvall the old fox of the game (Jackie Gleason shot pool and looked better than Duvall).

That L.C. (Duvall) is also named Cheever labels the basic bond and split, one not shared in 1961 by Newman and Gleason. Can the son finally defeat his father? Can the father, who's even up (or down) for cheap challenge in a diner, go beyond stripping the son of his game stake and chipping off another piece of his pride?

Barrymore is singer Billie, poker virgin, bystander given to remarks like, "I haven't had this much fun since junior high." But this is Vegas, the grad school of poker. And, sure as ace beats deuce, we guess that L.C. and Huck will compete in the world championship, millions on the table, the stiffest slab faces and killer stares wrapped around it (one player is like the pale, menacing love child of Darth Vader).

Director Curtis Hanson and co-writer Eric Roth also use Barrymore as a beacon of decency, the straight arrow ("I don't lie, steal or cheat"). Her sweet honesty will lovingly humble Huck and, in turn, shake his hard old dad. By comparison, "The Hustler" was a deep gaze into the abyss.

There's some attempt to explain poker, but even with a commentator intoning at the tournament this remains mostly bluff and luck and camera tricks. Stacking up chips and slapping down cards is not the gut stuff of major drama, though the movie has some sleek expertise of showmanship.

It's an oddity: part Barrymore chick flick, part duel of egos like "The Hustler," part tourist brochure for Vegas (including a golf course where Huck hustles rather absurdly). Plus a little role for Robert Downey Jr.

Vegas is fun but shallow, a place where people drink and gamble while "Like a Rolling Stone" gets piped as Muzak. In "Leaving Las Vegas," people drank, loved, suffered, died, so Vegas was only shallow on the surface.

"Lucky You" is all surface, much of it meant to display Bana as sexy dude, hunky on a motorcycle, sinking great putts, running \$350 up to \$10,288 with zap speed, testing Duvall, making Drew squish with feelings.

RATINGS4 STARS - Excellent.3 STARS - Worthy.2 STARS - Mixed.1 STAR - Poor.0 - Forget It (a dog) Not an ace, not a deuce, but gambling with the middle numbers, "Lucky You" does manage to sportingly pass the time. Even in Vegas in 2007, that might not be a big, winning hand.

A Warner Bros. release. Director: Curtis Hanson. Writers: Eric Roth, Curtis Hanson. Cast: Drew Barrymore, Eric Bana, Robert Duvall, Robert Downey Jr., Charles Martin Smith. Running time: 1 hour, 44 minutes. Rated PG-13. 2 stars.

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