



## Film Review- *Crossing Fields*

### Julie Mehta

Sex, drugs, betrayal--*Crossing Fields* has all the ingredients of a typical studio release. But director James Rosenow's first feature-length film focuses on something most mainstream movies avoid the way a town shuns an outcast: values. And its fortysomething midwestern mom protagonist is a far cry from the self-absorbed, superficial Gen-Xers that populate most of today's relationship flicks. Running for a limited time in New York City and slowly coming to a town near you, this entertaining, thought-provoking independent film examines the conflict between doing what's right for oneself and conforming to the moral standards imposed by society.

Made for just \$300,000, the movie has its share of technical imperfections but looks sleeker than most independents and features lovely setting shots filmed in Ohio, Kentucky, Illinois and a gentle, contemplative score.

The film centers on the thoroughly likable Carol Bradley (Reedy Gibbs), who is forced to reevaluate her lifelong ideas of wrong and right when her best friend Jessica Watson (Gwynyth Walsh) leaves her husband and becomes the self-proclaimed "town slut". Carol's world gets spun about some more when she is forced to deal with her own teenage daughter Denise's (Meadow Sisto) rebelliousness and the arrival of her newest boarder, 19-year-old James Carver (William James Jones), whose charm and sweetness she must reconcile with her disapproval of his casual sex and recreational marijuana use.

The movie follows Carol's reexamination of her values with sincerity and humor; there are some priceless scenes of Carol's exploration of drugs and her own sexuality. And though the film highlights society's behavioral double standards for men and women, the male characters certainly aren't all villains--James is almost too good to be true and J.K. Simmons does a great turn as Carol's easygoing, understanding husband, Guy. One of the most refreshing things about the movie is its treatment of race. The fact that James is black is barely made reference to. The characters are presented as people, not colors.

Toward the end, the film gets bogged down by all the ideas it wants to discuss. The repercussions of adultery on a family and the feelings that arise out of even casual intimacies are glossed over. Carol's change is not fully explored and James' role is left hanging, but overall the film engagingly addresses big questions through a small-town, very human-scale story. It leaves you thinking about who really decides the values we all live by and what their value is in our lives. And that's a lot more than most of today's plethora of cookie-cutter films offers.

*Crossing Fields*, written and directed by James Rosenow, is playing in a limited release around the country. If it doesn't come to your town, look for it on cable and video in 1999.

#### Julie Mehta-Freelance Writer/Editor

Ms. Mehta's work has appeared in a variety of print and online outlets such as *Travel + Leisure*, *Brides*, *Parenting*, *Pregnancy*, *Woman' World*, *Zagat*, *Citysearch.com*, and *ShermansTravel.com*. Ms. Mehta specializes in conducting highly personal interviews (celebrity subjects have included Gary Sinise, Fantasia Barrino, Natalie Cole, and Michael McDonald), tackling tough or sensitive article topics, and crafting essays and reviews.