

What About Bob?: Classy

By Kathy Amen

What About Bob? Directed by Frank Oz; written by Tom Schulman; produced by Laura Ziskin for Touchstone. Starring Bill Murray and Richard Dreyfuss. Rated PG. ★★☆☆

Usually, when we say actors have good "chemistry," we mean they're fun to watch together; even if they bicker a lot, there's a basic attraction between them.

Well, that was before *What About Bob?* Some of the best movie chemistry you'll ever see happens between Murray and Dreyfuss here. But it's the kind of chemistry that pairs nitro- with glycerine.

From their first scene, they come together like fingernails on a chalkboard. It's occasionally almost painful, but part of the pain is the stitch in your side from laughing so hard.

Bob (Murray) is a neurotic's neurotic. He's afraid of everything: elevators, doorknobs, and being without his psychiatrist while the latter is on vacation.

Dr. Leo Marvin (Dreyfuss) has just taken Bob on as a client, and has no idea how really weird he is, when he and his family take off for a month in New England.

Fabulously successful, Leo plans to entertain the "Good Morning,

America" crew while on vacation. They'll be interviewing him about his best-selling self-help book. With his life, family and the world under perfect control, he's ripe for a little shaking up, courtesy his new patient.

The large outlines of the movie's storyline are pretty obvious, but the script still manages to work in a few surprises. And given a story which could be played as a wicked little farce, the characters, from crazy Bob to up-tight Leo, are portrayed with humanity.

Although there are plenty of laughs here, none of them (or at least very few) are of the cheap shot variety.

It's hard to imagine more perfect casting for Bob and Leo than Murray and Dreyfuss. And the supporting players, mostly Leo's wife and kids (Julie Hagerty, Charlie Korsmo and Kathryn Erbe) are also appealing and believable.

Pacing, a vital element in comedy, is also nearly flawless. Some gags jump right to the punch line, while others show us the developmental stages; and director Oz has a knack for knowing which jokes to treat in which fashion.

Bob himself may not have much, but *What About Bob?* is a comedy with a lot of class.



Bob Wiley (Bill Murray, left) is a quirky guy who enlists the help of his friend Dr. Leo Marvin (Richard Dreyfuss, right), a stressed-out shrink whose vacation is ruined when Bob shows up unannounced on his doorstep, in Touchstone Pictures' new comedy *What About Bob?* The movie is directed by Frank Oz and distributed by Buena Vista Pictures. (Courtesy photo by Larry Wetcher)