SAFE HAVEN

Whatever else it is, and it's not *much* else, *Safe Haven* is the least boring Nicholas Sparks adaptation I've yet seen, mostly because it's so unequivocally bonkers.

Sure, this sappy romantic drama involving Julianne Hough's beautiful, damaged waif and Josh Duhamel's beautiful, damaged widower features all the niceties that you'd expect (and that millions of fans apparently adore) in the novelist's output: a seaside North Carolina setting, golden sunrises and sunsets aplenty, a pair of precocious and adorable tykes, a cadre of colorful character types, acoustic sad-bastard songs on the soundtrack, lots of kissing in the rain. And all things considered, with the gifted Lasse Hallström directing, the goings-on here are far less unbearable than usual; Hough and Duhamel develop a lovely if fundamentally unexciting rapport, and while not much happens during the pair's tentative courtship, at least their conversations, as written by adapters Leslie Bohem and Dana Stevens, sound reasonably human, which you certainly can't say for the wretched dialogue in *Nights in Rodanthe* or *Message in a Bottle*
. (Or
The Lucky One
or
The Notebook
or ... .)

But what makes *Safe Haven* both easily watchable and almost staggeringly ridiculous is its storyline concerning The Secret from Julianne Hough's past, which begins with her pursuit by a strangely, rather dangerously obsessed cop (David Lyons), and ends with an alcoholic psychopath with a gun, a little girl atop a burning building, Hough taking several brutal slugs to the face, and a cavalcade of fireworks. You watch this frenzied, hysterically manic action climax and think you've never seen anything so off-the-charts garish in a Nicholas Sparks endeavor, and then the movie pulls out its *real* trump card, with the revelation that one of the characters you've been following is actually ... . Nope. Can't spoil it for you. But if you do wind up seeing
Safe Haven
, at least know that the riotous overkill of its last 10 minutes will either piss you off terribly or tickle you to no end. And if you catch the movie at the Davenport cineplex, please be on the

lookout for my jaw. I dropped it during the screening and think it's still there.

FLIGHT OF THE BUTTERFLIES

For roughly two-thirds of *Flight of the Butterflies*' running length, this new, 45-minute documentary by director Mike Slee – currently playing at the Putnam Museum – is just the sort of pleasant, delicate, weightless trifle its title suggests. With cinematography by Simon De Glanville, Slee's outing looks lovely, and is filled with fascinating educational tidbits, such as the news that fewer than 1 percent of eggs and caterpillars actually survive harsh weather and predators long enough to become full-grown monarch butterflies. The movie's narrative, however, is a different matter; as he traces the means by which real-life researchers Fred and Norah Urquhart solved the mystery of wintertime butterfly migration, Slee's storytelling is a bit tedious, and his mostly stagnant reenactments don't take much advantage of the film's promising 3D presentation.

But boy does *that* ever change, because in the last 10 minutes, we finally arrive at the Mexican mountaintop upon which tens of millions of butterflies seasonally migrate, and in all my years of edu-tainment viewing at the Putnam, I'm not sure I've ever seen anything quite as miraculous. Tightly amassed on trees so that the drooping branches resemble Spanish moss, and fluttering through the air like confetti at a ticker-tape parade, the countless on-screen butterflies make for such visually resplendent imagery that your welling up at the spectacle wouldn't be an inappropriate reaction. And when spring comes, and the butterflies depart, the slow, unspeakably beautiful explosion that is the butterflies' mass exodus is enough to make you believe in God – or, at the very least, in the gods of nature docs – for our ability to witness sights this exquisite. *Flight of the Butterflies*' journey may be a somewhat poky one, but its destination is truly unforgettable.

For reviews of Beautiful Creates *and* A Good Day to Die Hard*, visit "* *Caster Roiled* *."*

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