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Clip from "What Dreams May Come"

Gene Siskel: Robin Williams and Annabella Sciorra are young and in love, but will it last forever? "What Dreams May Come" is one of the new fall movies we'll be reviewing this week on "Siskel & Ebert"...

Roger Ebert: And I'm Roger Ebert of the Chicago-Sun Times. After Robin Williams and Annabella Sciorra fall in love and get married at the beginning of "What Dreams May Come" they do not live happily ever after. There are a couple of big surprises right at the top of the movie – some of which have already been revealed by all the ads and trailers – so I feel safe, I guess, in saying that one of them is that Williams dies in a car crash. And he moves on to the next world, where he finds a long lost friend.

Clip

Roger: And look at the remarkable vision of heaven that is painted in this movie. It's like a landscape constructed out of the materials in his imagination – as if paradise were an impressionist painting.

Clip

Roger: His guide in this paradise is a man named Albert, played here by Cuba Gooding-Jr., who explains some of the rules of life after death.

Clip

"What Dreams May Come" is the latest visionary film by Vincent Ward, who made "The Navigator" and "Map of the Human Heart." Both of those were about journeys into unknown worlds, and so this is one – especially after the Robin Williams character determines to venture into hell itself to save soul-mate that he loves. This is one of the most visually imaginative films I've seen, and Williams somehow has a way of seeming at home in all these imaginary universes, just as he did in "Popeye" and "Jumanji". The flaw in the film, I think, is that it compromises on a conventional happy ending just when it seems poised to push us over the top into something that would really have been special. That holds it back from greatness – but, still, it's a very special movie.

Gene: Well, in terms of its visual strategy, it's great. No question about it, and I'm glad you singled out Vincent Ward. I had spotted his talent in "Map of the Human Heart", you're picking one of my top ten films that year. And if you're looking for a video recommendation; "Map of the Human Heart", which was also a love story, and I thought a very passionate one. The picture is stunning. I mean we know that computer animation is a major development in film art – well, this is the best it's ever been used, right? You haven't seen it used any better than this.

Roger: Well, it's not so much the technical quality so much as the imagination that I'm responding to.

Gene: How appropriate it is for this.

Roger: The way that he exists in a landscape of paint that is still wet because his imagination has just completed the painting that he is now part of. This movie is a movie just to be looked at, but I did feel at the end, if they hadn't been so conventional they could have maybe pushed it over a little bit more in the dramatic area as well.

Gene: Well, I was so excited looking at it, that did not occur to me. The other thing is, as long as I'm giving advice, see it in a movie theatre, the best movie theatre in your town, because you don't want to see this on tape someday.

Roger: You're right. You're right.

THE CRITICS' JOINT COMMENT FROM THE PROGRAM SUMMARY:

Gene:

Now let's take another look at the movies we reviewed on this show:

Two enthusiastic thumbs up for "What Dreams May Come", starring Robin Williams as a man on a mission in the afterlife. Congratulations to director Vincent Ward on one of the great visual achievements in film history.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AT THE END OF THE SHOW:

Roger: Well, now here we have a show with two movies that depend heavily on computer special effects – "What Dreams May Come" and "Antz" – and in both cases what the directors have done is use the power of the computer to express their own vision wonderfully, instead of just using it as a short cut.

Gene: Filmmakers are more computer literate than ever before and we're seeing the full power of the use of the computer in film.