

Berlin Film Festival Reviews

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My One and Only

By [LESLIE FELPERIN](#)



[Renee Zellweger](#) plays a Southern belle in 'My One and Only.'

A Herrick Entertainment, Raygun Prods. presentation of a Raygun production, in association with [Merv Griffin](#) Entertainment and [George Hamilton](#) Entertainment. (International sales: [Essential Entertainment](#), West Hollywood.) Produced by [Aaron Ryder](#), Norton Herrick. Executive producers, George Hamilton, Elayne Herrick, Michael Herrick. Co-producer, [Vicki Dee Rock](#). Co-executive producers, Ronnie Ward, [Robert Pritchard](#), [Robert Kosberg](#). Directed by [Richard Loncraine](#). Screenplay, [Charlie Peters](#).

Ann Devereaux - Renee Zellweger
George Devereaux - [Logan Lerman](#)
Dan Devereaux - [Kevin Bacon](#)
Becker - Troy Garity
Bill Massey - [David Koechner](#)
Charlie - [Eric McCormack](#)
Dr. Harlan Williams - [Chris Noth](#)
Robbie - [Mark Rendall](#)
Bud - Nick Stahl
Wallace McAllister - Steven Weber
Hope - Robin Weigert
Paula - Molly Quinn
Wendy - Phoebe Strole
Tom - J. C. MacKenzie

Given the volume of misery memoirs and movies these days, it's refreshing to find the worst that George Hamilton can say about his mother, on evidence of "My One and Only," was that she didn't take much interest in his literary tastes. Chirpy period pic stars Renee Zellweger as a Southern belle who ditches her philandering husband and crosses the country searching for a new stepfather for her two sons, one of whom will grow up to be Hamilton. Helmer Richard Loncraine's latest should appeal not only to an older femme demographic but also to anyone who relishes queeny dialogue.

Pleasant and pro-made though the pic is, it's a bit of a head-scratcher as to why this resolutely mainstream bit of froth should be programmed in competition at 2009's Berlinale, where it sticks out like a sore thumb against a field of largely issues-driven, arthouse competitors. Perhaps the fact the pic doesn't have a big studio backer could be a clue (a deal with a U.S. distributor was closing as this review went to press).

Meanwhile, a name cast should provide sufficiently well-known red-carpet crawlers to grab media attention when "Only" officially screens. Warm applause greeted the end credits at the pic's first press screening, although that may have been relief at seeing something genuinely funny after a long week of harder-edged fare.

Set roughly in the mid-1950s, judging by cars and clothes, the pic starts with Ann Devereaux (Zellweger) coming home unexpectedly to her Gotham apartment to find her bandleader hubby Dan (Kevin Bacon) in bed with another woman, the latest in his long line of infidelities. After coolly packing, one-time society lady Ann, who's not terribly attentive as a mother, hunts down her sons Robbie (Mark Rendall, last seen in Berlinale preem "The Exploding Girl") and George (Logan Lerman, from "[3:10 to Yuma](#)," and aces here).

After buying a Cadillac Eldorado soft-top, Ann and the boys set off on a cross-country quest to find her a wealthy new husband. First stop is Boston, where she almost gets hitched to martinet military man Harlan (Chris Noth). Moving on to Pittsburgh, she tries to land wealthy old acquaintance [Charlie Correll](#) (Eric McCormack), only to realize she's too old to hook a playboy.

As the threesome inch West, narrator George grows increasingly frustrated with the lack of stability in his life, and annoyed that his self-absorbed mother takes so little interest in his wants and likes. His swishy older half-brother Robbie, however, whose foot is just nudging the closet door open, is more sanguine about life on the road and is always keen to help his mother choose accessories.

Structurally, the screenplay, credited to Charlie Peters, sticks rigidly to the Hollywood comedy playbook, but there's a generous enough sprinkling of zingers and rat-a-tat dialogue to keep the chuckles coming, even if belly-laughs are few and far between.

The ensemble collectively displays crisp comic timing throughout. Leading the pack with elan, Zellweger, who's shown impressive facility before in similarly neo-screwball fare like "[Leatherheads](#)" and "[Down With Love](#)," deftly mixes frosty determination with fragility and an ineffable air of disappointment as Ann, a character who's part Blanche Dubois and part [Claudette Colbert](#) in "The Palm Beach Story".

Even so, "My One and Only" will require some aggressive marketing and strong critical support to reverse Zellweger's sliding B.O. appeal in wake the poor performance of "New in Town."

Other treats on the thesping front include underappreciated character actor David Koechner as yet another of Ann's prospective beaux, whose sole man-to-man advice to George is to always have a sweater or jacket handy because women "are never the right temperature."

Loncraine's helming is brisk and efficient, if somewhat anonymous, but this reps a definite improvement on his last -- the tired, by-numbers thriller "[Firewall](#)," or the bounce-free tennis comedy "[Wimbledon](#)."

Craft contributions are pro without showiness, highlighted by a thoughtfully chosen soundtrack of period tunes, supervised by [Steve Lindsey](#).

Camera (color, widescreen), [Marco Pontecorvo](#); editor, [Humphrey Dixon](#); music, [Mark Isham](#); music supervisor, Steve Lindsey; production designer, [Brian Morris](#); art directors, [Guy Barnes](#), [Halina Gebarowicz](#); set decorators, [Bryony Foster](#), [Wendy Ozols-Barnes](#); costume designer, [Doug Hall](#); sound (Dolby Digital/DTS/ SDDS), [Bruce Litecky](#); supervising sound editor, [Alastair Sirkett](#); visual effects supervisor, [Richard Higham](#); visual effects, the Senate VFX; stunt coordinator, [Jeffrey Lee Gibson](#); associate producer, [Beatrice Springborn](#); assistant director, Michel Ziegler; casting, [Mary Gail Artz](#), Shani Ginsburg. Reviewed at Berlin Film Festival (competing), Feb. 12, 2009. Running time: 107 MIN.