

## **POPMATTERS**

### **REVIEW**

**The Oh in Ohio**

**Director: Billy Kent**

**Cast: Parker Posey, Paul Rudd, Mischa Barton, Miranda Bailey, Keith David, Tim Russ, Robert John Burke, Liza Minnelli, Danny DeVito**

**6:15 PM, Monday March 13th - Paramount**

**9:45 PM, Friday March 17th - Paramount**

This is the second time during the festival I've seen a meditation on the power of the female orgasm. Thankfully, this occasion doesn't involve the MPAA shrinking away from the sight of female pleasure, but rather a comic look at one man's quest to give his wife that first, breathtaking O. At this point, the armchair psychologist in me wonders, Why the obsession with locating and displaying the female orgasm? There's something distinctly non-erotic in this quest from the male perspective, something akin to trapping fireflies in an empty mayonnaise jar. It certainly deserves this kind of comic treatment; The Oh in Ohio turns that first velvet quake into nothing less than the epiphany that keeps on giving.

A furred-up and paunched-out Paul Rudd plays Jack, a man whose life has been driven into hopeless despondency because he can't find his wife's pleasure palace. Parker Posey plays Priscilla, the über WASP ice queen who has never even touched herself "down there." The role seems tailor made for Posey; she seems to relish characters who keep in their emotions like drowning victims pounding on the lake ice above their heads. She plays Priscilla tightly, with a glassy smile and a robotic sense of ambition, and once she's had her big "O", she's like a little girl who's been made princess of pony land.

It would be easy to have all kinds of intellectual qualms with The Oh in Ohio if you delved any deeper than the hilarious surface. When Paul Rudd rediscovers his masculine virility by screwing a teenage student (Mischa Barton), I couldn't help but roll my eyes. We've been here before, but the script's dry wit manages to prevent the rote observations about gendered sexual discovery from staling the enjoyment. The Oh in Ohio is one of those movies filled with cameo roles designed for maximum laughter. Liza Minnelli shows up as a loud and crazy inspirational vagina speaker, who makes her assembled class turn their labias into painted metaphors and squat over a hand mirror. Keith David gets line after choice line in his role as the gym coach best friend with absolutely no respect for Paul Rudd's whimpering. Director Billy Kent clearly wants us to just sit back and laugh at the lengths we go to in order to get off. It's a sexual farce something like American Pie for people who listen to NPR and read Dwell magazine. I can live with that.

By the time we get to the end and our fair orgasmed maiden has decided to pursue a relationship with a much older, fat and balding Danny DeVito, you kind of have to shrug it off and just allow for the kind of directorial license that can turn a romantic comedy into a self-serving fantasy. It worked for Woody Allen, and it works here for Billy Kent.[back to PopMatters @ SXSW 2006 front page]