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Features

Outlandish *Butterfly Effect* not for kids

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Time travel is not a new theme for Sci-Fi thrillers. However, Eric Bress and J. Mackye Gruber's *The Butterfly Effect* puts a new spin on a time-tested (pun intended) formula.

Besides the obvious thrill of tampering with the past in order to change the future, the mode of transportation through time is what makes the movie unique.

In past movies the travelers have gone through machines, through black holes in space or through portals. Never has there been a film about time travel done through the mind. That is exactly what Evan (Ashton Kutcher) discovers that he can do: re-enter moments from his childhood when he reads excerpts from his old journals.

The film derives its title from the nature of a system to be sensitive to initial conditions that over time become unpredictable, like a butterfly flapping its wings in one area of the world, which causes a hurricane in another.

The movie is fast paced and exciting, but it has one flaw, a complete disregard for common sense. The very idea of Ashton Kutcher reading is amazing of itself, considering his past roles in movies such as *Dude, Where's My Car?* Furthermore, the events in the story all seem to be so outlandish that they leave the viewer questioning what (s)he is actually watching.

The story begins in the child-

hood of an obviously-troubled little Evan, whose drawings in his kindergarten class and his constant blackouts prompt his mother to send him to a psychiatrist. The doctor suggests that Evan write in a daily journal, which he does, but still he goes on to have a depressing childhood, complete with a father that tries to kill him and a family friend who forces him into child



Smart and Kutcher emote.

pornography.

Despite all this, Evan amazingly comes out A-OK. As a college student, he lives a normal college life, pursuing his studies in memory stimulation. Ironically, he doesn't even remember his own horrific past. When he realizes that he has this gap in what he can recall, he turns to the journals he wrote as a child and finds that through them, he can travel back in time and change the past.

With this power, Evan decides to better the lives of his old friends: abused Kayleigh (Amy Smart, best known for her role as James Van Der Beek's girlfriend in *Varsity Blues*), with whom Evan is completely in love; her violent brother, Tommy (William Lee Scott); and their pathetic, overweight

friend, Lenny (Elden Henson). Unlike Evan, all of them were impacted by the horror of childhood. Yet, as the title suggests, helping one can mean hurting another, and small changes can have big consequences.

Through time trips into his past, Evan goes from being an intellectual, to a prisoner, to a resident in a mental institution, to a person with physical disabilities—all on separate occasions. Kayleigh goes from being a diner waitress, to a shallow sorority girl, to a heroin-addicted prostitute. Lenny and Tommy also go through a variety of similar transformations.

The performances are uneven at best and reflect the talents of the actors. Kutcher's character stays more stable, fitting his one-dimensional acting skills, while Smart's character's personality constantly changes, allowing her to show her diverse range as an actor.

The movie makes an intriguing point: you can make plans, but you can't plan the results. Aside from the far-fetched nature of the narrative, the only problem with this movie was that while being engrossing, it was also disturbing. The flashbacks into childhood often showed images so horrible that they were left lingering in my mind, tainting the rest of the movie.

Overall, *The Butterfly Effect* is worth seeing, but definitely is not for small children.