

Cousins ★★★½

Year of Release: 1989

Review by Randy Parker

Country: USA

Verdict: See It

Cousins has all the necessary ingredients for a great dramatic comedy: a witty and whimsical script, inspired performances, a great sense of humor, a large and wonderful cast, and the beautiful scenery of Vancouver. Like *3 Men and a Baby*, *Cousins* is an Americanized version of a French film: 1975's *Cousin, Cousine*. It's a movie of weddings, marriage, family, infidelity, and—oh yes—love.

The plot is complicated, but it goes something like this. Larry and Tom are cousins, each of whom is not-so-happily-married. Tom starts an affair with Larry's wife, Tish, and to get even, Larry and Tom's wife, Maria, pretend to have an affair of their own. Soon the pretending turns to love and *Cousins* is off and running.

Cousins is populated by a wide assortment of interesting characters and caricatures. The acting is first rate down to even the smallest supporting role, and virtually every performance deserves mention. Ted Danson (in his first starring film role) finally gets to play a character with some depth and sensitivity. While Larry may be confident and charming

like Sam Malone on "Cheers," he is also complex and vulnerable, with more between his ears than empty space. As Maria, Isabella Rossellini is a joy to watch; she is shy, sensuous, and immensely alluring. Sean Young is perfectly cast as Larry's picture perfect wife, Tish, a superficial and trendy make-up consultant. Keith Coogan, from *Adventures in Babysitting*, is wonderfully weird and eccentric as Larry's rebellious son, Mitch. And finally, Lloyd Bridges in a tour de force performance is Mitch's rambunctious grandfather; he provides some of the movie's best lines and laughs.

Like *Moonstruck*, *Cousins* is a mix of drama and comedy. The film is larger than life and has a keen sense of the absurd. It understands human nature extremely well and milks it for every possible laugh and heart-tug. How often do you see a movie where you believe that two characters truly and sincerely care for and love each other, as friends and as lovers? Well, to its credit, *Cousins* is just such a movie. Let's hope the French continue to provide us with the inspiration to make films like *Cousins*.