

## Cry-Baby ★★

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**Year of Release:** 1990

Review by Randy Parker

**Country:** USA

**Verdict:** See It

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*Cry-Baby* is bursting with energy and style. But, sadly, the tongue-in-cheek comedy is bereft of originality. Director John Waters has his creative juices flowing, but they're not flowing into anything substantial.

*Cry-Baby* is a musical parody of '50s culture, but it lacks the satirical edge which allowed *Hairspray* to gel as a send-up of the early '60s. Who needs yet another '50s musical, especially when it has nothing new to add to the worn-out genre? *Cry-Baby* is essentially a noisy and pointless *Grease* rip-off.

Johnny Depp plays the John Travolta character, a bad boy rock 'n roll greaser. Amy Locane plays the Olivia Newton John character, a goody-two-shoes who falls in love with Depp. The crisp performances by Depp and Locane help to compensate for the dated characters, which are as soggy as corn flakes floating in a swimming pool.

Waters just doesn't have a compelling story to tell. The recycled plot pits snobby squares against ultra-hip juvenile delinquents, an idea which went sour eight years ago with the release of *Grease 2*. But fortunately, Waters has assembled a stellar

cast. One off-beat actor after another parades across the screen. Ricki Lake co-stars as Depp's extremely pregnant sister, who believes a woman's breasts are her best weapon. Former porn queen Traci Lords plays an oversexed slut; she struts around in tight, revealing outfits, looking like she stepped straight out of a Russ Meyer movie. Patty Hearst, of all people, has a lot of fun playing Lords' chipper, bright-eyed mother. Willem Dafoe pops up unexpectedly as a Juvenile Hall security guard. Also on hand are Iggy Pop, Troy Donahue, Joey Heatherton, David Nelson, Mink Stole, Joe Dallesandro, and Polly Bergen, a cast to end all casts. The real standout in terms of shock value, however, is Kim McGuire as Hatchet-Face, a girl so ugly she makes the mutt in *Turner & Hooch* look like Miss America.

*Cry-Baby* is surprisingly tame and restrained for a John Waters movie, which is one reason it's a let down. The plot is so light-weight you kind of hope the director will do something tasteless just to spice things up. In *Cry-Baby*, Waters has replaced outrageous and offensive with mindless and moronic.