

WHY I LOVE...

John Hughes

BY JENNIFER SWANN

As a kid, everything I knew about Chicago I learned from John Hughes. My first glimpses of the Art Institute were seen in a montage of ditch-day activities in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*—long before I knew of Seurat or could identify *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*. I never would have imagined that I would end up a student at the School of the Art Institute, passing through the momentous walls of the museum every week in art history courses, or while taking a short-cut to campus on a snowy day.

Hughes' Chicago was a land of teenagers, first crushes and family disasters, where a kid could live on his own and battle burglars, unpredictable Uncles were always standing by to flip pancakes with a snow shovel, and the strangers you meet at the airport would become your long-term traveling companions.

John Hughes makes films that invite every imaginable unpleasant situation to occur while trapped in a car with your parents all the way from Chicago to L.A. In *National Lampoon's Vacation*, the Griswolds travel 2,460 miles just to go to Wally World (the amusement park better known as Six Flags Magic Mountain), where I spent my youth and started my first job at the ripe age of 16 *Candles*. I took for granted that the Southern California weather permitted me to ride on roller coasters in shorts and t-shirts all year round, and ultimately dreamed of the white Christmas I saw in *Christmas Vacation*. My suburban neighborhood put on the best light display in town—complete with robotic swiveling Santa's and Vegas-like rooftop electronics—but still, I wanted my lips to turn freeze-colored blue like Audrey Griswold's did while her father uprooted the perfect Christmas tree from the ground.

I fantasized about getting invited to a detention *Breakfast Club* with Emilio Estevez, or being left *Home Alone* and swinging from trapezes in tree houses like Kevin McAllister. I even had my own Deluxe TalkGirl cassette recorder by the fourth grade. Hughes made adolescence attractive, and puberty awkward enough to aspire to.

John Hughes depicted Chicago as a city of eccentric crazies with good hearts and relentless ideas. No matter how many times your birthday was forgotten or your plane delayed, you'd always run into a sympathetic stranger played by John Candy, who happened to be the Polka King of the Midwest and would offer you a ride back home in a Budget van with his band. Hughes's Chicago was idealistic and innocent, kind-hearted and unconventional, a city that called for adventure whether you asked for it or not.

Though I've called myself a Chicago resident for almost two years, I've done fewer things than Ferris Bueller did in just one day. I have yet to stand at the top of the Sears tower, see a Cubs game, go to the Board of Trade, drive a Ferrari, or hijack a parade. Luckily, Bueller has given me a set of goals to aim for and Hughes has made them seem more than attainable.

If I'm not in class next week, look for me on a float in the St. Paddy's Day Parade! 🍀

WHY I HATE...

Rom-Coms

BY JOANIE HAIMOWITZ

When I was little, all my expectations about dating came from Hollywood romantic comedies. I looked forward to pubescent romances that included boys playing boomboxes outside my window, saving me from my boring family vacation in the Poconos with some *Dirty Dancing* and being serenaded with "Can't Take My Eyes Off of You" from the bleachers of my high school's football stadium. In other words, a dating life full of grand gestures and all-consuming crushes.

Love affairs, I thought, were supposed to be extravagant bi-coastal liaisons involving radio shows and consummating on top of the Empire State Building. My loves would be marked by chance encounters and fortuitous moments. But it turns out that there is no ice skating rink at the end of a lifetime of star-crossed *Serendipity*, just awkward moments, missed chances and guys from country clubs who actually deserve fish being dumped into their convertibles.

Now, don't get me wrong, My distaste doesn't run amuck: I do love *When Harry Met Sally* and some of the other classics. And, I will always idolize *Annie Hall*, hoping that some day some neurotic little man will look at me and say: "You, you, you're like New York, Jewish, left-wing, liberal, intellectual, Central Park West, Brandeis University, the socialist summer camps and the, the father with the Ben Shahn drawings, right, and the really, y'know, strike-oriented kind of, red diaper, stop me before I make a complete imbecile of myself." (I mean, it is all true... minus the Brandeis University part.) And, of course there is always the wonderfully fantastic black romantic comedy—who wouldn't want her boyfriend to kill all the popular *Heathers* and then drive her to suicide?

When I'm being totally honest, it's not the actual romantic comedy genre that I hate. It is the boiled-down version that results in *Must Love Dogs* and the aging and still alone John Cusack who built up our dreams only to have them come crashing down in a world where dating only happens on the internet (and is nothing like *You've Got Mail*). Romance does still exist—somewhere out in the ether. I have a box of love notes written to me over the years, boys still do write songs about the girls (and the boys) they are infatuated with, and I have heard tell of an instance in which a multimillionaire rescued a prostitute from her sad life.

But there was always a touch of reality to those films: the truth about dating that we chose to ignore in favor of the Molly Ringwald ending. There are lots of hopelessly single, in love with their best friend, Duckys out there, as well as anxiety-ridden Cameron-like sidekicks to the Buellers of the world. We do know that *Love, Actually* does include husbands that become infatuated with their secretaries, and that there are a ton of wanky Hugh Grant-like men who will treat you like *Bridget Jones* (after all, maybe it is the dry and boring Colin Firths that will fill our golden years with love and caring).

All this said though, when I am down in the dumps, sometimes the only thing that can perk me up is indulging in my favorite movie of all time: *An American President* (because it's not unrealistic *at all* to date and fall in love with the President of the United States). 🍀



Staff photos by Jen Mosier