

The Boy Who Could Fly

Plaza (opens next week)

When Eric (Jay Underwood) was 5 years old his parents went on a vacation. Tragically, their plane crashed, leaving no survivors. As soon as the accident occurred and before anyone told him what had happened, Eric stretched out his arms like an airplane, focused his eyes on some far-off destination and never spoke again.

Now in his teens, Eric lives under the steady supervision of his alcoholic uncle. At the insistence of a teacher who thinks the autistic boy might benefit from being around people, he stays in school. He sits in the back of class, staring at the wall and tossing paper airplanes.

As soon as school is over, Eric heads straight for his second-story bedroom. There he sits on the windowsill, dangles his feet over the side, stretches his arms out and "flies."

Millie (Lucy Deakins), Eric's new next-door neighbor, feels a special bond with Eric because she is still trying to cope with the death of her father. With patience and persistence, she slowly begins

to draw Eric out of his shell. Eventually he begins to react. When Eric actually smiles, it is a moment of triumph.

As their unusual friendship develops, Millie begins to suspect the impossible. Certain unexplainable events, as well as the cryptic mutterings of his uncle, lead her to believe that Eric really *can* fly.

This intriguing premise is made convincing by the terrific performance of Jay Underwood.

Underwood helps us understand the pain of someone who suddenly feels trapped behind the walls he helped build. He creates the best special effect a film could ever hope for: a wonderful performance.

The Boy Who Could Fly is funny, sweet, and, thanks to Underwood, occasionally touching. But ambiguity has never been a strong point of American cinema and this movie certainly takes no chances.

We want to believe in the impossible. But when we're *forced* to believe the impossible, the magic is gone. Faith is believing what you can't see. If *The Boy Who Could Fly* had allowed us to show a little more faith, it might have soared.

by Michael Giltz