



TRI-STAR PICTURES

Rosalie (Tracy Ullman) and her mother Nadja (Joan Plowright) can't seem to kill Rosalie's husband in *I Love You To Death*.

★ ★ *I Love You To Death*
Royal Park

Five years from now, *I Love You To Death* will be only a minor footnote in the careers of a number of talented actors and director Lawrence Kasdan. But today it surely ranks as one of the major disappointments of the year.

It's the story of Rosalie (Tracey Ullman), the loving wife of a philandering pizza-maker named Joey (Kevin Kline). She is devoted

to her man, but when Rosalie finds out he's been cheating, she decides to kill him.

This isn't as easy as it sounds. Rosalie's mom (Joan Plowright) tries unsuccessfully to blow up Joey's car. Later, Rosalie herself mixes bottles and bottles of sleeping pills into his spaghetti dinner. Joey merely complains about an upset stomach.

Rosalie then convinces a friend

who's always had a crush on her to shoot Joey. This doesn't work either. "I've got a headache," Joey complains as he stumbles around the house with a gaping bullet wound in the back of his head. In desperation, she hires some doped-up druggies to shoot Joey again — but he *still* doesn't die!

This crazy plot about a woman who keeps trying to kill her husband but can't seem to succeed is actually based on a real story. And therein lies the problem. The script by John Kostmayer and the direction by Kasdan never attempt to spice up this marvelous conceit with the black humor and screwball zaniness it begs for. Instead, *I Love You To Death* is presented in a dull, matter-of-fact manner.

Only Plowright as Rosalie's mother manages a few funny moments. When Rosalie is angry she wasn't told about the attempted bombing of Joey's car, Plowright explains sheepishly that "I thought it would be a nice surprise." Later, when Rosalie is upset that the two men hired to shoot Joey are on drugs, Momma

says, "Don't think of them as drug addicts; think of them as killers."

William Hurt and Keanu Reeves are dull as the two killers. They seem to wander in, improvise a little and then wander off. And River Phoenix plays off his public persona to little effect as the love-struck friend of Rosalie.

Kline and Ullman fare little better. He uses a cheesy Italian accent that wears thin early on. She is effectively grim as the betrayed

wife, but it's hardly an appropriate performance for what is essentially a comedy.

As for Kasdan, there is no telling what made him choose this as the first film he would direct based on someone else's script. But, since he already has such movies as *The Big Chill* and *Body Heat* to his credit, this should prove to be a quickly forgotten aberration.

BY MICHAEL GILTZ