

# —reel reviews—

## ★ ★ ★ ★ *River's Edge*

*Oaks Four West*

In 1986's *Stand By Me*, a group of kids went on a trek to see a dead body. It was a sweetly nostalgic tale about the loss of innocence.

Now we have *Edge*, another film about a group of kids who go to see a dead body. But this is no case of a loss of innocence: these teen-agers never seem to have had any.

In the film, Samson (Daniel Roebuck) kills his girlfriend, then shows everyone her body. They react numbly. None of them do anything, not even cry.

These kids are so empty they have to go to extremes just to feel anything. Samson is an emotional cipher, too disinterested even to bother burying his victim's body. The only time he sparks to life is when describing the murder.

Parents, if they appear at all, are ineffectual and useless. A surrogate family of sorts is headed by Feck (Dennis Hopper), a local eccentric who hands out marijuana to the kids that visit.

True, Hopper probably could

take out a patent on bizarre, off-beat characters, but he provides a sensitive, almost endearing performance that brings Feck wonderfully to life.

He is matched up and down the line by an excellent cast. Crispin Glover's hyperactive performance as the speed-freak Layne is best appreciated in a crowded theater where it elicits the clearly strived-for laughter. Roebuck is chilling as the murderer. And perhaps best of all is Reeves, who is understated and quietly terrific as Matt, the film's nominal protagonist.

They are all abetted by Tim Hunter's subtle and sympathetic direction and the marvelous screenplay by Neil Jimenez. Jimenez maintains a cool moral perspective without making pronouncements or pointing fingers. And his zesty sense of humor provides some of the funniest moments in recent memory.

*River's Edge* may unnerve or disturb you, but it is certainly one of the most intelligent and provocative movies of the year. It is harrowing and hilarious, and it should not be missed.

By Michael Giltz