

# ‘Friends with Money’ Portrays Melting Pot of Lifestyles

By Tara Ellicott  
Staff Writer

“Friends with Money” is a comedy-drama about four female friends who have the typical problems of straight, married, upper-class white women.

Rating: ★★★★★☆

The movie centers on Olivia, played by Jennifer Aniston, the only character who does not reflect this demographic — at least not yet. As described by her friend Jane, played by Frances McDormand (“City by the Sea”), Olivia is “single, a pothead and a maid.”

The movie consists of witty banter and gossip as the characters meet to discuss their lives, exchange sarcastic remarks and chitchat with their spouses about their friends’ marriages and financial situations. Their words flow smoothly, exposing the complex dynamics of relationships among friends and spouses.

It is apparent that the director and writer, Nicole Holofcener, is comfortable with and knowledgeable about this world, probably drawing on personal experience when she wrote the dialogue.

But the movie does not push any boundaries. With television successes such as “Sex and the City” and “Desperate Housewives,” audiences have shown interest in stories about women in their 40s and other straight and slender white women.

The movie, though well-written, delivers what audiences have come to expect. Perhaps if “gay,” “full-figured” or “black” could be used to describe these characters, then this movie would be truly memorable for challenging the traditionally male-centered Hollywood paradigm.

None of the roles in “Friends with Money” were particularly challenging for the talented cast, but the script does at least provide some semi-interesting characters.

The basic plot has Olivia quitting her teaching job at a prestigious high school to become a maid. The audience is supposed to pity her because she can do better. The non-white maids that her wealthy friends employ are apparently considered better-suited for domestic service because no one in the movie seems concerned about their unfortunate situations.

Olivia has a sleazy new boyfriend, who likes to have sex with her at the houses she cleans and takes his cut of the money she earns. This is probably healthier than her last relationship with a married man she still constantly calls but eventually hangs up on.

Christine, played by Catherine Keener (“Capote”), and her husband are screenwriters who collaborate on projects. But his inability to express emotion and her inability to notice when he shaves his beard let the audience know that their marriage is doomed.

Jane and her closeted gay or metrosexual husband have a strong friendship. Yet Jane is hostile to everyone around her — particularly her wait staff — and she has decided to stop washing her hair.

Joan Cusack plays the fourth woman, Franny, whose husband appears to be problem-free, mostly because they have loads of money which she inherited and he loves to spend.

# Alumni Play ‘La Ronde’ Questions the Psychology of Sex

By Michael Chung  
Staff Writer

Men say they have the upper hand after sex, while women also claim the advantage. Figuring out which is right — if either — can be difficult.

Those wondering the truth should see an alumni-studded play opening tonight on the Cal State East Bay campus that explores the psychology of sex and gender while looking at authority and the way in which the sexual encounter affects it.

The play, “La Ronde,” kicks off the CSUEB Theatre and Dance Department season in association with the ReVerb Theatre.

“The play is divided into ten self-contained scenes or vignettes, each between one man and one woman,” said director Monique Williams.

Williams joins fellow CSUEB alumni Marissa Keltie and David Toda, who will star in the production. The show also features alumnus Bong Dizon and current theatre student Rachel Throesch.

Sound and costume designs were headed by CSUEB alumni April Rodriguez and Courtney Flores. The set was designed by Torben Torp-Smith,

a master’s student at San Francisco State University, while writing credits go to Arthur Schnitzler.

Thomas Hird, chair of the CSUEB Theatre and Dance Department, expects the production to be a truly theatrical experience.

“I have watched Dawn learn from every mentor and experience, especially in our international travels,” he said. “It’s not that Dawn is developing into a good director, she already is an amazing director. ‘La Ronde’ provides

an interesting challenge for an audience today, but she will make it clear to us and no doubt astonish us.”

Williams, an Oakland native who began her career in show business by taking dance lessons and joining the choir as a child, acted in her first ‘real’ play, “Day of Absence,” when she was 15 years old.

Although Williams originally attended SFSU after graduating from high school in 1996, she eventually transferred to CSUEB and graduated in

2003 with a bachelor’s degree in Theatre Arts with an option in Directing.

Since then, Williams has directed several CSUEB productions, including “Medea,” “The Trojan Women,” “Creon,” “A Christmas Carol” and “Children of Eden,” which ran in August.

Williams has directed two one-acts — “Pretty Bird” and “The Past is the

Past” — since doing “Children of Eden.”

“In addition to ‘La Ronde,’ I am currently directing a ten-minute play, ‘Flowers for the Dead,’ for the San Francisco Young Playwrights Festival,” she said. “I am also in preparation for ‘Scapin, the Cheat,’ which I will be co-directing with Ulises Alcala, a professor of Theatre and Dance at CSUEB.”



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12:25, 2:55, 5:10, 7:35, 9:50

❖ Ice Age: The Meltdown (PG)

12:25, 1:10, 2:50, 3:35, 5:15, 6:15, 7:40, 8:40, 10:00

❖ The Wild (G)

12:45, 3:00, 5:20, 7:25, 9:30

❖ Take the Lead (PG-13)

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❖ Silent Hill (R)

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❖ American Dreamz (PG-13)

11:55, 2:25, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00

❖ Thank You for Smoking (R)

12:05, 2:35, 5:05, 7:20, 9:30

❖ Scary Movie 4 (PG-13)

11:45, 12:40, 1:50, 2:45, 3:55, 4:50, 6:00, 6:55, 8:05, 9:00, 9:35, 10:10

❖ Ice Age: The Meltdown (PG)

12:15, 2:40, 4:55, 7:10, 9:25

❖ The Benchwarmers (PG-13)

11:35, 1:40, 3:45, 5:55, 8:00, 10:15

❖ The Wild (G)

11:25, 12:20, 1:30, 2:30, 3:35, 4:35, 5:40, 6:40, 7:45, 9:50

❖ Sneak Preview-Akeelah and the Bee (PG)

Sat: 7:00 PM

❖ Take the Lead (PG-13)

11:50, 2:20, 5:15, 7:50, 10:20

❖ Inside Man (R)

1:25, 4:15, 7:05, 9:55

❖ Lucky Number Slevin (R)

11:30, 2:15, 4:45, 7:35, 10:25

❖ La Mujer De Mi Hermano (R)

12:35, 2:50, 5:10, 7:25, 9:40

❖ ATL (PG-13)

4:30, 9:20

❖ Phat Girlz (PG-13)

11:40, 2:00, 7:00

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❖ Silent Hill (R)

11:50, 12:55, 1:40, 2:50, 3:45, 4:40, 5:45, 6:40, 7:35, 8:40, 9:40, 10:35, 12:00

❖ American Dreamz (PG-13)

11:40, 2:25, 4:55, 7:30, 10:00

❖ Thank You for Smoking (R)

11:40, 2:00, 4:20, 7:05, 9:25, 11:45

❖ Scary Movie 4 (PG-13)

11:55, 12:25, 12:50, 1:15, 2:00, 2:35, 3:00, 3:25, 4:15, 4:45, 5:10, 5:35, 6:25, 6:55, 7:20, 7:45, 8:10, 8:35, 9:05, 9:30, 9:55, 10:15, 10:45, 11:10, 11:40, 12:10

❖ Ice Age: The Meltdown (PG)

11:30, 12:00, 12:40, 1:45, 2:15, 2:55, 3:55, 4:35, 5:25, 6:50, 7:40, 9:15, 9:50, 11:30, 12:05

❖ Sneak Preview-Akeelah and the Bee (PG)

SAT: 7:00 P.M.

❖ The Benchwarmers (PG-13)

11:20, 1:30, 3:40, 5:50, 8:05, 10:10, 12:15

❖ The Wild (G)

11:35, 12:30, 1:40, 2:40, 3:50, 5:00, 5:55, 7:10, 8:15, 10:25

❖ Take the Lead (PG-13)

11:45, 2:30, 5:15, 7:50, 9:20, 10:20, 11:55

❖ Inside Man (R)

1:10, 4:10, 7:10, 10:10

❖ Lucky Number Slevin (R)

11:45, 2:20, 4:50, 7:25, 10:05

❖ Failure to Launch (PG-13)

5:40, 8:00, 10:25

❖ V for Vendetta (R)

1:05, 4:05, 7:05, 10:05

❖ La Mujer De Mi Hermano (R)

11:35, 1:55, 4:30, 7:15, 9:45, 12:05

❖ ATL (PG-13)

5:30, 10:20

❖ Phat Girlz (PG-13)

12:05, 3:05, 8:00

❖ She's the Man (PG-13)

12:15, 3:10

❖ Friends with Money (R)

11:25, 1:35, 3:55, 6:15, 8:25, 10:40

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