

Little Darlings

US : 1980 : dir. Ronald F Maxwell : Paramount : 95 min
 prod: Stephen J. Friedman : scr: Kimi Peck & Dalene Young : dir.ph.: Fred Batka

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 Tatum O'Neal; Kristy McNichol; Armand Assante; Matt Dillon; Maggie Blye; Nicolas Coster;
 Krista Erickson; Alexa Kenin; Cynthia Nixon

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	€	M	⚡	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
5763	3.5	11	2	1,620	-	-	-	-	-	No	unseen



Two little maids from school are we... Tatum O'Neal left and Kristy McNichol right, hungering for defloration both – allegedly
Source: Blackhawk Film Digest Winter 1980-81

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001 review:

"Tatum and Kristy wager which one will be the first to lose her virginity at summer camp. Not quite as sleazy as it sounds, but not very inspiring, either. McNichol easily out-acts her co-star with a solid performance. Shot in Panavision. ** "

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review – identical to above

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"Teenage girls at a summer camp take bets on who will lose her virginity first. Crass and tasteless comedy with only prurient appeal."

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89 review:

"Unabsorbing story of two 15-year old girls at summer camp who are in a race to be the first to lose their virginity. O'Neal is disappointing, but McNichol is excellent, skilfully portraying a range of emotions and rising far above the material. ** "

Rating the Movies (1990) review:

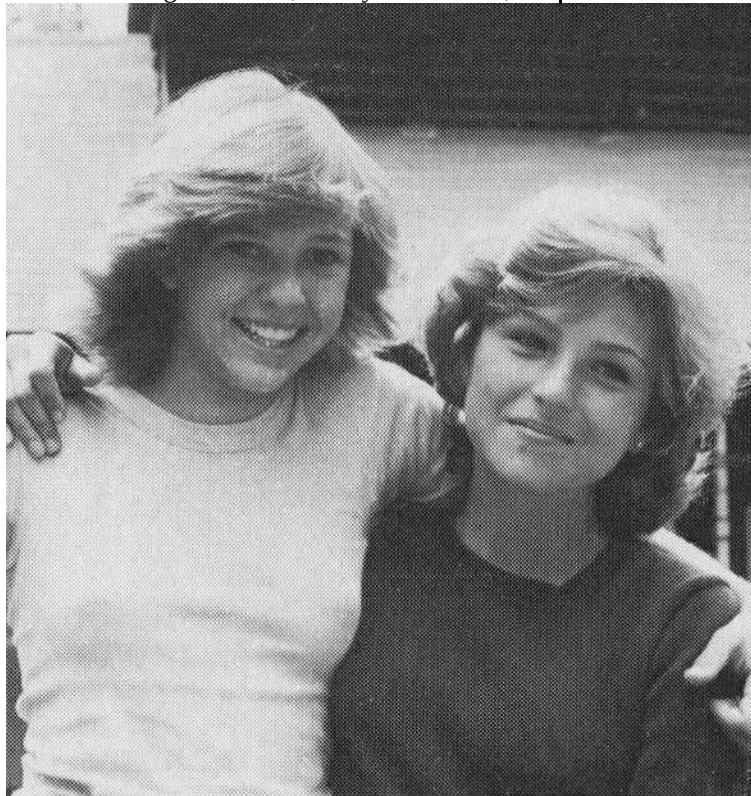
"In this disappointing movie, teenagers McNichol and O'Neal race to see which one will be the first to lose her virginity. The youngsters are appealing, and they are certainly better than the simple-minded script. Despite the sexual titillation and exploitation, the ending is socially redeeming; yet the film leaves a bad after-taste. Also with Kris Erickson and Armand Assante. Rated "R". ** "

The Time Out Film Guide review:

"Setting out as a rough-edged youthsplotter [*sic*] (factions at summer camp take bets on whether Tatum O'Neal or Kristy McNichol will lose her virginity first), it soon becomes apparent that the real message is that "growing up" is not to be achieved by the simple act of defloration. "**LITTLE DARLINGS**" proceeds

to hammer the point home, till you emerge from its setting of woods, handy boathouses,

and the boys' camp across the lake, head



15 years old? Who are you kidding? O'Neal (right, 18) look like McNichol's sophisticated older sister. But no-one sophisticated would be dragged screaming to a summer camp, right?

Source: A Pictorial Guide to the Talkies

ringing with the maxim "At 15, sex is bad, friendship good, and clean fun the answer". If you can get over the moralising, there's a treat from Kristy McNichol as the rough-talking, Marlboro-smoking kid who can deliver a kick to the cobblers to rival Paul Newman, while Matt Dillon as her "gentle giant" initiator and the soundtrack (Blondie, Bonnie Raitt) also provide some welcome relief."

TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995 review:

"This is basically just another Hollywood "summer camp" tale with a rather distasteful story about two girls involved in a bet about who will lose her virginity first. In this instance, however, the playing overcomes the formula development of Kimi Peck and Dalene Young's screenplay. In particular, Kristy McNichol (whose career has not progressed since as it should have done), as a tough teenager with a sleep-around divorcee mother, is so true, so natural in the conveying of inner feelings as to leave you gasping for more. All the sadness and cynicism of 15 years of rootless existence is expressed in these brown eyes. It's a performance deserving of the Oscar nomination it didn't get. ** "

Variety Movie Guide 1993 review:

" **"LITTLE DARLINGS"** makes an honest attempt to deal with the sexual stirrings of two teenage girls, but most adults are likely to dismiss the effort as puppy love [sic] with appeal to prurient interests.

Tatum O'Neal and Kristy McNichol are both excellent as virgins of widely different social backgrounds who meet at summer camp. O'Neal is a sheltered rich girl and McNichol the poor, streetwise urchin but their different upbringings do not release their shared hesitancy about making love for the first time.

In his feature debut, director Ronald F Maxwell isn't perfect. But he gets several fine scenes from his performers, especially when O'Neal deals with her love interest, when McNichol deals with her love interest, and best of all, when O'Neal and McNichol finally level with each other."

Video Movie Guide 1993 review:

“A story of the trials and tribulations of teenage virginity¹, this film too often lapses into chronic cuteness, with characters more darling than realistic. **"LITTLE DARLINGS"** follows the antics of two 15-year old outcasts – rich, sophisticated Ferris Whitney (Tatum O’Neal) and poor, belligerent Angel Bright (Kristy McNichol) – as they compete to "score" with a boy first. Rated "R". ** ”

Film Review 1980-81 incidental note:

“...Kristy McNichol is another hopeful young starlet, sharing billing with Tatum O’Neal in **"LITTLE DARLINGS"**, and famous for US TV’s **"Family"**, but probably best remembered here as Burt Reynolds’s ostensibly rough daughter in **"THE END"**...”

[**no listing** in "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics’ Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

Radio Times notes:

“A group of innocent [*sic*] but sexually eager girls are spending their summer holidays at Camp Little Wolf.”

“Tomboy Kristy McNichol and rich kid Tatum O’Neal compete to be the first teenager at a summer camp to lose her virginity. Skilful performances from the girls overcome some of the tale’s rowdier elements. *** ”

What’s On TV notes:

“Premiere. Teenage girls discover life and love in a summer camp. Stars Tatum O’Neal.”

“Drama. Two girls learn about life. With Tatum O’Neal.”

¹ Uh ??

No further information currently available. "Innocent but sexually eager" is of course a howling contradiction in terms, but par for the course where adolescence is concerned. Rich girl befriends poor girl is a film cliché in itself, but compare this title, for example, with "[OLD ENOUGH](#)" (84), recounting a similar friendship between Sarah Boyd and Rainbow Harvest. Both films, *nota bene*, were scripted by women, so allegations of prurient male wish-fulfilment in their sex-hungry plotlines are shot down immediately.

The race to shed virginity at summer camp is, let's face it, an American sport as old as baseball, so all the remarks about questionable taste are mere parental naïveté. What were the boys about, then, in "**MEATBALLS**", "**POISON IVY**" and a fistful of other lowbrow summer camp comedies of the same vintage? Wasn't busting their cherries their primary goal in life? In which case there's a sexist double standard operating to find the same ambition unseemly among girls. This is not to deny the exploitative slant to the film, pitched (by those women writers) at salivating male fantasies, but in the real world of 1980 USA an attractive "streetwise" 15-year old would have discarded her virginity long since if she'd a mind to do it.

Although the American commercial film industry have been using sex to merchandise their products since the early silent era, they are the last people to treat frankly with anything as incendiary as permissive sexual attitudes among the under-16s, so this film's underlying message of "save it for later" was entirely to be expected. The intended teen audience will have recognised a cop-out when they saw one, while alarmed parents will have breathed a qualified sigh of relief.

The moral totem of Virginity (which is a presumptively feminine "virtue") is inextricably entwined in Western culture with institutionalised religion, so that as the church's grip on society has weakened, the tabu against so-called "extra-marital" sex, or sex "before marriage" has been undermined also. It has fallen to the state to step in and criminalise sexual activity before marriageable age, ostensibly to "protect" the young, but in fact to vouchsafe parental conservatism about their children jettisoning virginity as and when their individual natures dictate.

In recent decades right wing evangelists in the US tried (without notable success) to re-market teenage virginity in a sex-saturated culture under the slogan "true love waits" (i.e. for marriage), but a far more effective campaign to the same end has been waged by the sex abuse industry, sparking draconian new legislation and a generalised climate of paranoia.

Adolescents divesting themselves of virginity are now officially (whether they like it or not) "victims", and their partners, whether or not of the same age, "sex offenders". Yet despite it all, research (such as it is) on this question shows that increasing numbers of teenagers are sexually active by the age of 14. So now we have those bad laws, and the generalised state of paranoia, and the teen pregnancy rates continue to rise. Good work all round, I say.

Tatum O'Neal was 18, not 15, and although three years to an adult is no time at all, it is a long distance in mid-adolescence. Despite an Oscar for her debut appearance in "**PAPER MOON**" (73), she never quite amounted to anything in her father's shadow. She played with him again in "**NICKELODEON**" (76), with Walter Matthau in "**THE BAD NEWS BEARS**" (76), and redundantly reprised the Elizabeth Taylor role in "**INTERNATIONAL VELVET**" (78), but though initially hailed as another Jodie Foster, her future prospects lay elsewhere. Nothing else is known of Kristy McNichol.

See subject index under **SUMMER CAMPS / SUMMER SCHOOLS**, and under [SEX & SEXUALITY](#) for other febrile tales of defloration, from "**PRETTY BABY**" to "**LOLITA**", "**HET DEBUUT**" and "**HOME BEFORE MIDNIGHT**". Male teen defloration epics are just as common, though for added piquancy the respondent is very frequently an adult woman (more

double standards at work). Teenage boys hungering to be deflowered in the posterior orifice are not generally the subject of motion pictures, so that's a whole new seam for Hollywood to mine one day. They've been mining the teenage boys for some while now.