

Pay it Forward

US : 2000 : dir. Mimi Leder : Warner Bros : 123 min
 prod: Peter Abrams, Robert Levy & Steven Reuther : scr: Leslie Dixon : dir.ph.:
[Haley Joel Osment](#)
 Kevin Spacey; Helen Hunt; Angie Dickinson; James Caviezel; Jay Mohr; Jon Bon Jovi

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	□	€	Z	⊗	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Canny Haley Joel Osment devises a new twist on the old pyramid-selling scam

Source: Empire

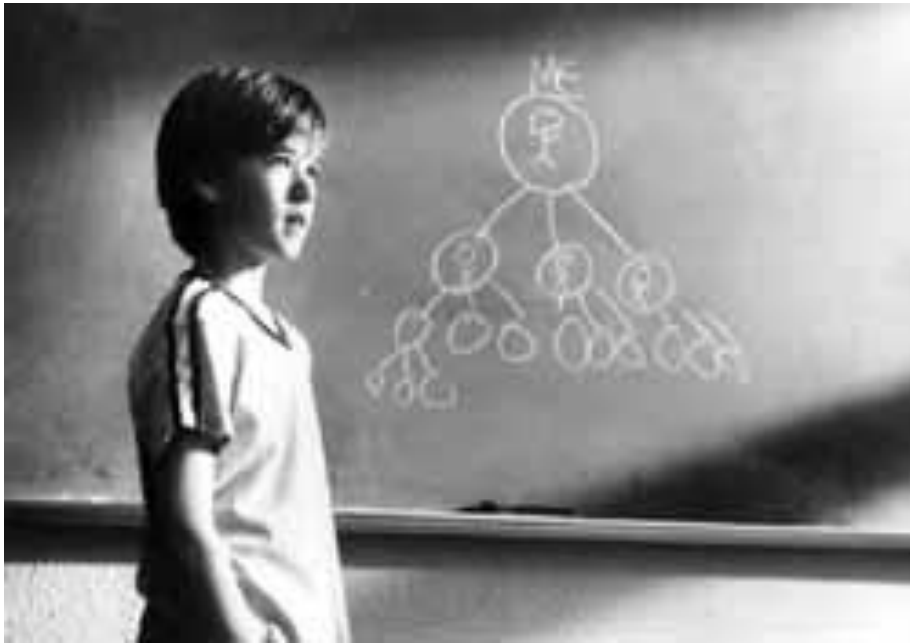
Empire – February 2001 – review:

"Burn-scarred teacher, Mr Simonet, challenges his pupils to do something to change the world. Eugene, a kid living with his alcoholic mother, comes up with a scheme which involves him performing three acts of kindness, and those who receive the favours do the same, paying the favour forward."

"This should be a five star film. Before its release in the States, it was tipped to be an Oscar frontrunner. Then people saw it. And however many good things there are to say,

there's no escaping that this is a great film lumbered with a simply terrible third act. This isn't a plot spoiler, this is a warning: if you choose to see this movie, and leave the cinema seething with resentment, we told you so.

Now the good stuff. The three leads are excellent. Haley Joel Osment is astonishing. Proving that "THE SIXTH SENSE" wasn't a one-off, he manages to be both passionate, as the boy with a plan to change the world, and still kid-like – watching the wrestling and howling with glee. Oh, and remember to look



At school, Osment demonstrates the geometry and mathematics of Good Deeds
Source: Vereniging Martijn website

out for his dad, Eugene Osment, as "Cop Who Gives Directions".

Then there's Helen Hunt as the transitional white-trash woman, moving from haggard alcoholic to motivated mother. Her low points are far more real than the typically glossy screen version of alcoholism (see Sandra Bullock in "28 DAYS", or Meg Ryan in "**WHEN A MAN LOVES A WOMAN**"); she is raw and, frankly, ugly. Even Spacey, lumbered with a clichéd character, manages to rise above the material given to him, and inspire genuine warmth as the troubled teacher.

The script (based on the Catherine Ryan Hyde book - avoid it in all good bookshops now) does have its good points - Trevor's interpretation of "good deeds" and who deserves them is slightly dubious, but that only aids the drama. Directed with a surprising lack of urgency and realism by "E.R." veteran Leder, it is, however, refreshing to see a Las Vegas-set story which reveals an underbelly of low life away from the bright lights, but the supporting cast, particularly Jay Mohr as a reporter chasing

the "pay it forward" story, continually fall short of the standards set by the main characters. And then, of course, there's that ending...

Mesmerising performances from Spacey, Hunt and Osment aren't enough to save a film damned by such an appalling final third. Worth seeing for proof these three award-winners aren't resting on their laurels, but only the most sentimentally minded will come away without feeling cheated by such blatant manipulation. *** " - Emma Cochrane

Vereniging Martijn Filmtips webpage note:
www.fpc.net/pages/martijn/filmtips

"A delicious long commercial with the slogan "improve the world, start with yourself". With Haley Joel Osment --known from "**THE 6TH SENSE**" - as Trevor, a generous and bright kid who thinks the world would be very different if everyone did three good deeds for others.."

No further information currently available. Osment morphed directly from this into the android child who seeks the love of his adoptive “parents” in the Spielberg/Kubrick collaboration “**A.I.**”. Despite mixed reviews for both films, his personal credit with critics remains high, and it seems clear he has moved into the “No. 1 child actor” slot vacated by Macaulay Culkin. Reviewers have praised his acting abilities (which didn’t happen often to Culkin), but luck and shrewd career management count for more these days – perhaps they always did - than native talent. The story seems a close cousin of those films where a boy or girl resolves to tell the plain truth for a week (see “**NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH**”, “**LIAR LIAR**”) or writes a letter to the President of the Soviet Union extolling the virtues of world peace, etc (see “**AMAZING GRACE AND CHUCK**”). They can be grouped loosely under the heading “*And a Little Child Shall Lead Them*” political whimsies.

See subject index under **ALCOHOLISM / DRUGS, SCHOOL** and potentially **THE CHILD AS POLITICAL SYMBOL**.