

# MOVIE DIGEST

## THE DEAL ★★

At Loews 34th St. (1:41). R: Language, violence.

If the price of gas ever hits \$6 a gallon, as it does in the second-rate thriller "The Deal," I hope the world won't have to depend on Christian Slater to solve the energy crisis. His investment banker character, Tom Grover, isn't entirely up to the demands of global conspiracy, Russian spies and greedy corporations. Nor for a "Fatal Attraction"-like animal heart left in a bloody bucket in his refrigerator either as a warning or a valentine.

"The Deal" was written by Wall Street insider Ruth Epstein, and it's full of dizzying technical detail that only those in mergers-and-acquisitions may fully appreciate.

Tom needs to sign off on some kind of \$20 billion deal involving oil-well skulduggery. It's an ethical dilemma, with a lot at stake — including making sure there's no early-retirement plan in the works for his pretty colleague (Selma Blair), with whom he has been doing a little off-shore drilling, if you know what I mean.

The story's unnecessary and unconvincing Russian spies are out of "Rocky & Bullwinkle," but Blair is quite enjoyable as a sassy, capable idealist.

Jami Bernard

## THE TALENT GIVEN US ★★ 1/2

At the Angelika (1:38). Not rated: Language, adult themes.

Andrew Wagner's experimental film is a clever, effective hybrid of documentary, home movie and reality show, except it's fictional — or at least a little bit fictional. You come away admiring Wagner's nerve above all else.

He cast his own sisters, the actresses Emily ("ER") and Maggie Wagner, and his nonactor parents, Allen and Judy, to play themselves (or some version of themselves) as they take off on an emotion-packed road trip in search of ... Andrew!

All the Wagners are funny and natural, especially the elderly parents as they bicker their way across America. Shot as a documentary, "The Talent Given Us" messes with your mind and expectations. It's weird and wonderful. **J.B.**

## THE GREAT WATER ★★

At the Quad (1:30). Not rated: Mature themes.

A dying man in contemporary Macedonia reflects on his childhood at a Communist-run orphanage in post-World War II Yugoslavia. The framing device is unnecessary; what happens inside the orphanage, where the sons and daughters of anti-Communists are forced to adopt the party's strict doctrines, is powerful enough.

The film follows the developing friendship between two boys who share a determination to resist the increasingly hostile system. The boys — one is actually played by a girl, but you'd



TENDER TOUCH: Nathalie Press (l.) and Emily Blunt in "My Summer of Love"

never guess — are angels in hell, and director Ivo Trajkov is way too prone to melodrama.

"The Great Water" is ultimately about the indomitability of faith, and the Christian symbolism is laid on thick. But the story, adapted from a famous behind-the-Iron-Curtain novel, sheds light on a subject few people have known about.

Jack Mathews

## MY SUMMER OF LOVE ★★★

At Lincoln Plaza, Landmark Sunshine (1:27). R: Sexuality, language, drug use.

"My Summer of Love" travels so

deeply into the confusions of female adolescence that you'd never know this deceptively languid British film was directed by a Polish-born man.

Of course, Pawel Pawlikowski is helped by his young leads, who make a memorable impact in this unsettling romance between a beautiful rich girl (Emily Blunt) and a rough-edged orphan (Nathalie Press).

Hiding a sharp edge within every swoon, Pawlikowski pushes his actors into the shadowed corners of sexual exploration, religious fervor and class politics. They're up to the challenge.

Elizabeth Weltzman