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THE PRINCE AND ME /

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U.S. Release Date: April 2, 2004
Distributor: Paramount
Director: Martha Coolidge
Cast: Julia Stiles
MPAA Rating: PG (for some sex-related material and language)

"Copenhagen Holiday" by Scott Holleran

Martha Coolidge's simple romance, **The Prince and Me**, is truly romantic and that is a happy Hollywood occasion. The love story has a beginning, a middle and an ending, fine romantic leads, real, passionate love and not a trace of tragedy. **The Prince and Me** means what its title says: this is the girl's love story.

From the beginning, when Julia Stiles' college-bound eyes focus like a laser on her pre-medical goals, the princess-in-waiting is neither daffy party girl nor promiscuous flirt. Stiles' Paige is smart, self-confident and pretty, and she's impervious to unimportant feminine matters. Paige is more likely to be a heart surgeon than a homemaker, and it's delightful to watch a young woman be allowed to have an ambition on screen -- especially a goal higher than recreation or procreation as an end in itself.

As farm girl Paige ponders medicine over matrimony, Denmark's playboy Prince Edward (mischievous Luke Mably) is racing the streets of Copenhagen in search of the latest thrill, much to the chagrin of his ice queen mother (Miranda Richardson) and ailing father, the King of Denmark (James Fox). When Edward sees a television commercial for soft-core porn -- with drunken college coeds flashing their breasts -- he insists on enrolling in an American university. Edward's royal parents, fed up with his antics winding up on the front page, indulge his fantasy.

The party prince, concealing his royalty under the plain moniker Eddie, meets the pre-med Paige and they don't mesh. But she needs to learn Shakespeare and he needs to learn chemistry. Joining the could-be courtship are Eddie's royal aide (Ben Miller), Paige's friends and her boss at the local beer joint.

Eddie and Paige grow and learn to be friends first. As their feelings change, their romance becomes deeper. Director Coolidge and the writers depict a slow, sequential relationship. While it drags, the upshot is worth the wait, and what's predictable plays like a scratchy old romantic record that makes you weak in the knees.

Stiles is too guarded to sell Paige's surrender to Eddie and, the script is sometimes uneven. Coolidge (**Rambling Rose**) forgets the setting -- Thanksgiving in Wisconsin without subzero temperatures is like college



GRADE THIS MOVIE

BOM Users	B- (71 users)

without beer -- but **The Prince and Me** renders realism and romance with glamour, and their love is not blind; it is earned.

The royal rubber meets the road with aristocratic elegance, beautiful music and fluttering butterflies, and **The Prince and Me** finishes as an enchanted elegy to youthful, romantic love.

A final scene is clipped and, while the resolution is perfect, **The Prince and Me** would be better with less time on campus and a longer prelude to happy endings. Still, Martha Coolidge and Katherine Fugate, who co-created the story and script, convey the splendor that's missing from movies. **The Prince and Me** is modest in scale -- don't expect a **Roman Holiday** -- but it presents a vibrant picture of ideal, romantic love.

Grade: A-
