

THE TIMES OF INDIA - BOMBAY : Tuesday, January 17, 1995

ENGLISH, AUGUST (India) : Dev Benegal makes an impressive debut feature film based on Upamanyu Chatterjee's novel about a young civil servant's brush with small town reality.

At the outset, the style seems disconcerting - mood lighting, hallucinatory passages and self-consciously droll moments on the soundtrack. Once the pilot builds up, we are hooked. The IAS rookie, Agastya, encounters characters who're either absurd, self-seeking or lost in a backwoods place called Madna in Andhra Pradesh.

The director, while being faithful to the book, creates a world where a newcomer is assailed by fat mosquitoes, fatter frogs and a nutty neighbour who drinks himself silly. A film replete with saucy dialogue and smart observations, it is enjoyable while it lasts. But that's it. Newcomer Rahul Bose and cameraman Anup Jotwani deserve high praise. Outdoor locales and excerpts from vintage rock music are well used. Yet at points, the original score by D.Wood and Vikram Joglekar is obtrusive and extremely unkind to the ears.