

## DVD Review: Jonathan Demme's Brilliant 'Something Wild' Joins Criterion

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on May 10, 2011 - 2:33pm

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CHICAGO – I love Jonathan Demme's "Something Wild" with such passion that I can recommend the new Criterion Collection edition of the underrated '80s classic and yet still realize that it's something of a disappointment. Criterion leads the way in Blu-ray and DVD in every way, but even they can release editions that seem a bit lackluster, and such is the case with "Something Wild." Pick it up because the movie rules, but don't get your hopes too high.



DVD Rating: **4.0/5.0**

When I think of films that are daring in their use of tone changes, I often think of one of my favorites of the '80s, "Something Wild." Demme and screenwriter E. Max Frye delivered a masterpiece of balancing comedy, drama, romance, and suspense. "Something Wild" proves that a film doesn't need to be as tightly placed into certain genre categories. Demme is one of the best American directors at balancing elements in a way that makes plot twists come completely out of nowhere and yet also feel organic. You don't see movies like "Something Wild" that often any more — ones that balance so many tones and yet still stay true to their characters. Perhaps it's because it's not that easy to pull this off.

If you're unfamiliar with Jonathan Demme's 1986 film (he would win the Oscar only five years later for "The Silence of the Lambs"), Jeff Daniels stars as Charles Driggs, a relatively stuck-up businessman who stumbles upon the girl of his dreams in the rebellious, free-spirited Lulu (Melanie Griffith). Frye reveals in an interview on the DVD release that the whole film was inspired by seeing a "Village" girl like Lulu meet a man in a suit for lunch. He wondered how on Earth these two seemingly different people got together. With a fantastic supporting performance by Ray Liotta (arguably never better in his debut role) and spectacular local flavor on Charles and Lulu's road trip, "Something Wild" is a comedy with more than just heart. It's got soul.



Something Wild was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on May 10th, 2011

Photo credit: Courtesy of The Criterion Collection

Sadly, the Criterion release of "Something Wild" is a bit depressing. The transfer, supervised by Demme and his great common collaborator Tak Fujimoto, is damn good. It's a DVD transfer that looks near-HD in quality. But the special features are scant. The interview with Demme is occasionally fascinating but runs just barely over 30 minutes. It's interesting that Kevin Kline was first thought of for the Jeff Daniels part, and also interesting that the movie wouldn't be the same if not for "Body Double" and "Purple Rose of Cairo," the two movies that led to the casting of the stars of "Something Wild." But most people who love "Something Wild" probably already own the film and it's unlikely they'll want to upgrade just for a better transfer and a few anecdotes.

I can't get enough of "Something Wild." It's got my favorite performances by everyone involved (especially Griffith, who never balanced her sexuality with her vulnerability in quite the same way again) and features directorial work that ranks among the best of the '80s. Watch the movie. Again and again. But be prepared to be disappointed by the bonus material.

#### Special Features:

- o New Interviews with Demme and Screenwriter E. Max Frye
- o Original Theatrical Trailer
- o A Booklet Featuring an Essay by Film Critic David Thompson

*"Something Wild" stars Jeff Daniels, Melanie Griffith, and Ray Liotta. It was written by E. Max Frye and directed by Jonathan Demme. It is rated R and was released by The Criterion Collection on Blu-ray and DVD on May 10th, 2011.*

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [12]  
Content Director  
[HollywoodChicago.com](http://HollywoodChicago.com)  
[brian@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com) [11]



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