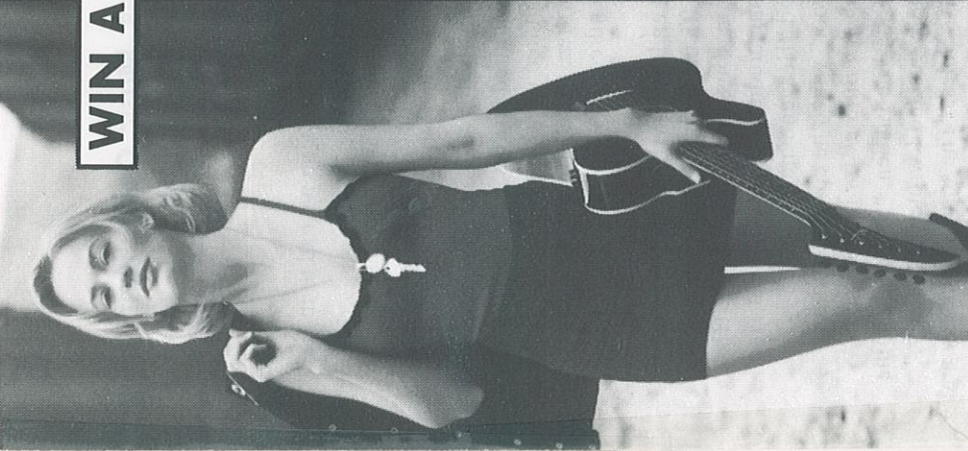


WIN A TRIP TO NASHVILLE!

RIVER PHOENIX STAND  
BY SAMANTHA MATHIS  
DERMOT MULRONEY YOUR  
SANDRA BULLOCK DREAM

Send us a photo or essay of what love means to you and you could win a trip for 2 to Nashville or \$100.00 in free music (your choice of CD's or cassettes).

# THE THING CALLED LOVE



PARAMOUNT PICTURES PRESENTS A JOHN DAVIS PRODUCTION A FILM BY PETER BOGDANOVICH THE THING CALLED LOVE RIVER PHOENIX SAMANTHA MATHIS  
DERMOT MULRONEY SANDRA BULLOCK COSTUME DESIGNER RITA RIGGS PRODUCED BY MICHAEL SEYMOUR DIRECTED BY PETER JAMES, A.L.S.  
EDITED BY DARLENE K. CHAN EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS GEORGE FOLSEY, JR. WRITTEN BY CAROL HEKKINEN PRODUCED BY JOHN DAVIS DIRECTED BY PETER BOGDANOVICH  
PG-13  
Standard Allow Available on GAIN RECORDS  
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ENTER Send your photo or essay along with this entry form TO WIN to: The Thing Called Love, c/o Marquee Marketing Network, 2055 Walton Rd. St. Louis, MO 63114. Sorry, photos and essays become the property of the Marquee Marketing Network and can't be returned.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Video Store \_\_\_\_\_

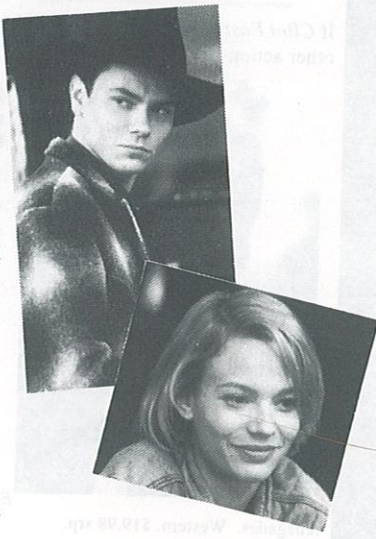
Rules: No purchase necessary. No cash equivalents will be given. Drawing held and winners announced week of 3/1/94. Prizes are guaranteed to be given away. 1st place: One trip for 2 to Nashville, includes airfare and 2 nights hotel accommodations (some restrictions may apply). 2nd place: \$100.00 in free music (your choice of CD's or cassettes, subject to availability). Neither Paramount Home Video, its parent, affiliates, subsidiaries, or their employees are responsible in any way for this sweepstakes or the award of prizes under this sweepstakes. Soud Disk-ributors, participating video dealers, their families and employees are not eligible to enter or win. Void where prohibited by law.

new this month

february 16

## THE THING CALLED LOVE

In Nashville, there are 10,000 singer-songwriters chasing success...with one chance in a million of ever getting it. For Miranda Presley, that's the one chance worth taking. Fresh from New York City, Miranda meets three other hopefuls: a shy cowboy, a Southern belle and a cocky Texan with brooding good looks and a honeyed voice. Together they begin a rocky ride down Music City's well-worn highway, finding hope, heartbreak, happiness...and **The Thing Called Love**. Starring *River Phoenix*, *Sandra Bullock* and *Samantha Mathis*. Available from Paramount Home Video. Rated PG-13 for language. \$95.24 suggested retail.





# behind the scenes

An Exclusive Interview



## J. Steven Soles, Music Consultant for "The Thing Called Love"

by Lynn Petersen

A movie score subliminally pulls us into the magical world of film. It gets us involved, lets us feel a character's emotions and warns us of eminent danger. The task of synchronizing music to film requires much more work than just choosing a catchy tune.

### Mathis, Bullock

"It's [process of scoring a film] complicated and tricky," says J. Steven Soles, Executive Music Consultant for "The Thing Called Love." "It must be done within the context of what the directors want, what the producers want, what the studio wants - all these different factors applying pressure. It is very complicated to satisfy so many people."

Set in Nashville, "The Thing Called Love" follows the trail of four young songwriters looking for love and success in the country music capital. Soles read the script, then set about finding songs that fit the characters. "We needed about thirty songs," says Soles. "Paramount wanted to commis-

sion the songs, so we had to make deals up front. They didn't want materials submitted unsolicited."

"We finally weeded it down to about a hundred writers," says Soles. "A hundred to two hundred songs were written, then we found another hundred on our own."

"I ended up writing what was difficult to find - which were the humorous songs," says Soles. His song credits include "Big Bar Hair" and "Heaven Knocking On My Door" which he co-wrote with Sandra Bullock for her character, Linda Lue Linden. "She brought me the lyrics and I wrote the melody," says Soles. "The song was catchy and at the same time reflected Linda Lue's character." Co-star River Phoenix also contributed an original song to the production, "Lone Star State Of Mine."

After listening to hundreds of songs, only fifty were used in the film. Soles love of music and dedication to finding songs that helped define the characters in "The Thing Called Love," makes it a film that leaves your toes tapping.

DOUBLE TAKES  
featuring more great films by:  
CLINT EASTWOOD

**MARQUEE**

**VIDEO REPORT**

FEBRUARY 1994

Win a Trip!

For a Few Dollars More (1967) Two men (James Stewart and Clint Eastwood) team up to catch a dangerous outlaw, but their opposing personalities make their alliance both powerful and dangerous. Western. \$19.98 up.

The Outlaw Jury Wales (1976) Clint Eastwood with James Stewart. The family is wiped out by outlaws. Western. \$19.98 up.



# Opry Man

In its brief theatrical release, River Phoenix's last completed film, the country-music romance 'Thing Called Love,' was all but lost. Sadly, so was its star. **BY TY BURR**

**IT'S A LOVE THING:**  
Country crooners  
Phoenix and Mathis  
just duet in *The  
Thing Called Love*



**M**AYBE River Phoenix would have evinced the same nervous grace as an adult actor that he showed as a teenager. We'll never know. Last Halloween, as everyone knows by now, he died of a drug overdose. He left behind 2½ movie projects. *Silent Tongue*, a drama written and directed by Sam Shepard (and filmed in early 1992), opens theatrically this March. The unfinished *Dark Blood* was junked. And **THE THING CALLED LOVE**

(1993, Paramount, PG-13, priced for rental), a country & western romance that has turned out to be the last film River Phoenix completed, makes its debut on home video this week.

*The Thing Called Love* is practically a straight-to-tape product. It barely saw the inside of theaters (receiving spotty play dates in the South and Southwest and later in Seattle), and it cruised below the radar of national reviewers. You can see why the studio wrote it off, too: As a snapshot of young songwriters in love, the movie is woefully predictable. Yet as a portrait of an actor flailing in

inarticulate despair, it is riveting.

And Phoenix isn't even the main character. Samantha Mathis is, playing a tough but untested New York City girl named Miranda Presley ("no relation"), who arrives in Nashville hoping to make it as a singer and tunesmith. Falling in with the wannabes who cluster around the club-audition scene, she makes pals with a dim-bulb Alabama peach (Sandra Bullock) and ping-pongs between two different Cute Boys: sweet, dull Kyle (Dermot Mulroney) and rude, sexy James (Phoenix).

The gal, her pal, and two guys to



choose from—you're right, it *does* sound like half of the movies that have been made since D.W. Griffith first yelled, "Action." But while a lack of originality can be finessed with moviemaking flair, *Thing Called Love* is as coy and unspecific as its silly title. Structured like a diagram in a Screenwriting 101 textbook, the movie wastes the talents of Mathis, Mulroney, and Bullock—solid up-and-comers all (Mulroney squeezes what charm he can out of a warmed-over Ralph Bellamy role).

Mostly, this is another fruitless clue in that ongoing cinematic mystery: What the Hell Happened to Peter Bogdanovich? Years ago he was mentioned in the same breath as Coppola, Scorsese, and Spielberg—young directors with singular visions. But Bogdanovich's few movies in the last decade are notable for their near-total *lack* of personality. What's worse, the director who used Hank Williams songs so brilliantly in *The Last Picture Show*—as sardonic howls that mocked the characters from beyond the grave—now appears to have no concept of what makes country music *country*. Cameos by K.T. Oslin, Trisha Yearwood, and Webb Wilder give *Thing* a surface legitimacy, but the songs performed by the main characters are a far cry from the Opry spirit. Miranda's "breakthrough" composition is a pleasant bit of fern-bar folk, while Phoenix sings a rocker called "Lone Star State of Mine" that might be of interest to Billy Joel's lawyers.

At least Phoenix gives his numbers an angry weirdness that passes for charisma. But whether or not the rumors of his drug use on the set are true, this actor does not seem all there. Certainly, his musical performances are oddly filmed: Microphones are consistently positioned to hide his mouth, as if it wasn't worth the trouble of getting him to lip-synch to his prerecorded voice.

And for the first time in his career, characterization gets in the way of the character. James is meant to be an immature but mesmerizing bad boy; the actor plays him as a withdrawn ball of angst who shies from the camera like a colt. There's a scene in which James talks Miranda into marrying him in an impromptu ceremony at a convenience store near Graceland. It's meant to be

"wacky," but Phoenix rushes through his lines with an edgy impatience that skews your view of Miranda: She'd have to be delusionary to take him up on it.

*The Thing Called Love* doesn't make a persuasive case for What Might Have Been, the way James Dean's whoop-up exit does in *Giant*. Rather, it starkly hints at offscreen turmoils. You sense River Phoenix would rather be elsewhere, and whether he's responding to the movie or to something larger is not ours to say. But the feeling persists. It's like watching a premature ghost. **C-**

## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1994

**BRIEFLY:** Two country ladies — K.T. Oslin and Tammy Wynette — play two sisters of Merleen (Ann Wedgeworth) on an episode of CBS' *Evening Shade* to air Feb. 28.

Due in stores the week of  
Feb. 10-16:

### CASSETTES

◆ **THE THING CALLED LOVE**  
(1993, Paramount, PG-13)  
River Phoenix (in one of his last roles) and Samantha Mathis play fledgling country singers in Nashville.

EW  
2/4/94

CF 2-94

If you've wondered what happened to the movie *A Thing Called Love*, the answer is "not much." The film about aspiring Nashville songwriters starred RIVER PHOENIX and garnered major publicity when it was being shot around Music City a few months back. Well, the movie opened in a few markets

around the south in late summer and failed to attract a following. It should be hitting your video stores any day now, and the soundtrack, which features CLAY WALKER, KEVIN WELCH, K.T. OSLIN and DENNIS ROBBINS, is available on Giant Records.

A great deal of credit must go to music video for literally putting a new face on country music. Through national outlets TNN and CMT, viewers are discovering not just a fresh batch of country stars but also country's lyrical force. Videos interpret the stories of the songs and dramatize their emotions. They've created stars—K.T. Oslin, with her impactful "80s Ladies,"

CSR 2-94

"I always hate it when someone says, 'She'd be so pretty if she'd just lose that weight.' Well how about Liz Taylor? She's more beautiful than ever. I play around with the same 20 pounds over and over. I lose it, I gain it, I lose it again. But you have to learn to deal with it."

K.T. Oslin, October 1993

CSR 2-94

Entertainment Weekly  
2/11/94 P. 2/2



**FEBRUARY 16**  
**THE THING CALLED LOVE**

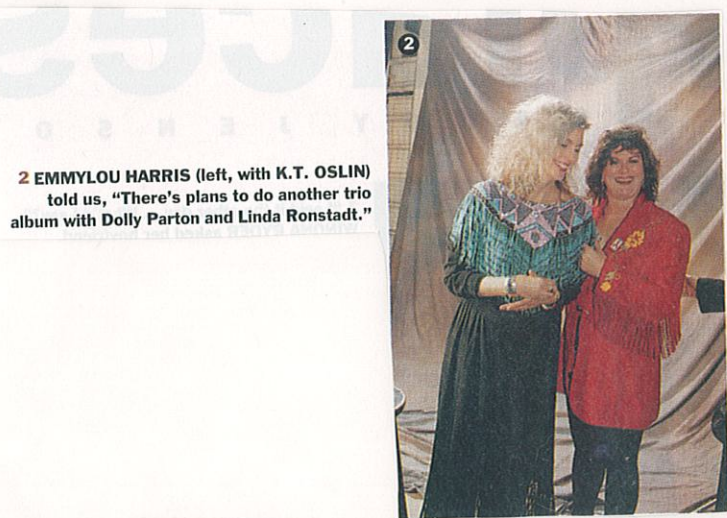


© 1993 Paramount Home Video

River Phoenix, Samantha Mathis, Dermot Mulroney

With a song in their heart and no money in their pocket, four dreamers chase fame and fortune in Nashville, Tennessee. What they find is hope, heartache and a *Thing Called Love*. With a soundtrack that features today's hottest country singers, this love story proves that if you stand by your dreams, sometimes they really do come true. River Phoenix fans won't want to miss his final performance. **Rated: PG-13**

Block Buster FLYER FEB. 1994



**2 EMMYLOU HARRIS** (left, with **K.T. OSLIN**) told us, "There's plans to do another trio album with Dolly Parton and Linda Ronstadt."

**Country Comfort** *Grand Ole Opry House* "Nashville has been real slow to make a statement about this disease," **Marty Stuart** said at "Country Music Cares," a benefit concert on World AIDS Day. "You have to think of yourself as being a part of the family of man and woman," added **Emmylou Harris**. Despite the serious nature of the cause, the mood backstage was lighthearted. Asked about her most unusual stage experience, Harris replied: "I had a man ask if he could have my dress. I told him I was still very attached to that dress." **Pam Tillis** had a guy give her "a big ol' hug," and **Rosanne Cash's** ex, **Rodney Crowell**, has had fans "run onstage in their underwear." "I had a drunk throw up on my piano," newcomer **Victoria Shaw** recalled of a performance at a California Moose lodge. **Tracy Lawrence** said his most bizarre gift was "a barbed-wire wreath with a boot in the middle." And **K.T. Oslin** once phoned a fan whose answering machine picked up with "If you're calling to talk about K.T., leave a message." (She did.) **DEBORAH EVANS PRICE**