



Virginia Madsen and Tom Hulce in *Slamdance*

Slamdance surprises

Slamdance
Cineplex Odeon films
Plaza

by Jerome Ryckborst

Slamdance is a familiar story in a shiny wrapper. It's a thriller about a weird cartoonist named Drood (Tom Hulce) and several dead blondes. Can you guess? He gets framed, and so must prove his innocence.

This film is entertaining and suspenseful, with humorous moments, especially in the way Drood deals with his family. He visits his wife at work, puts the place in a uproar, gets hit in the balls with a rubber chicken, then asks his estranged wife if they really shouldn't get back together.

The title — *Slamdance* — is actually a nice metaphor for the relationship between Drood and his wife. They're trying to be intimate, but there's a certain amount of violence in their emotional abuse of each other.

Though *Slamdance* is a typical thriller, there are unexpected surprises. Virginia Madsen plays a blonde bombshell who

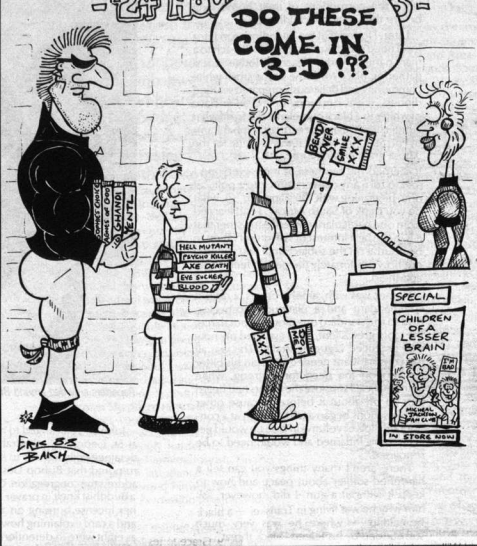
looks very dramatic even when she's dead. She could be the next sex-symbol/superstar. Harry Dean Stanton and Herta Ware add surprising depth to the otherwise typical cop and landlady. But Tom Hulce's performance as Drood is diminished by a poor script in the opening scenes. He might as well wear a sign that says: "Hi. My name is Drood. I'm an irresponsible, weird and lovable cartoonist..." and so on. The audience is too aware of what the script intends; there is a lack of subtlety.

The plot is disjointed, as if nobody really stopped to consider the film as a whole. Yet at times *Slamdance* is breathtaking.

There are scenes — visual compositions — which show that a few people did put some thought into their work. The sets are terrific, and each shot is beautifully framed. The close-ups are very intimate but not intrusive, showing the characters' personal lives without embarrassing the viewer.

In most respects, the film is successful. Although the content is unstable at times, and the twists in the plot border on unbelievable, *Slamdance* is worth a look. It's fun, escapist, but nothing exceptional.

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