

Itsy bitsy teeny weeny movie review and photo gallery

What about Bob?

directed by Frank Oz
starring Bill Murray and Richard Dreyfuss
produced by Touchstone Pictures

What About Bob? is truly formulaic, of the straight guy/crazy guy genre. The outrageous comedy compensates for the bland run of the mill plot, however, and renders this a must-see summer flick.

—Mattia Magnatta



Madonna: Truth or Dare
directed by Alek Koshishian
produced by Propaganda Films

I have to tell you, Madonna, the "documentary" portion of *Truth or Dare* really impressed me. You should be credited with allowing five months of your life to be filmed with such objectivity. Of course the cinematographers were working for you, on a film by you and with you acting as executive producer; but, I'm sure if *60 Minutes* had made *Truth or Dare*, it would have turned out exactly the same.

—Jim Russell



FX 2: The Deadly Art of Illusion

directed by Richard Franklin
starring Bryan Brown and Brian Dennehy
produced by Orion Pictures

Everything adds up to an enjoyable action/mystery film, and a unique one: only two people are killed, only one car explodes, there are no car chases and the hero tosses aside every gun that is offered to him.

FX 2 is not a ground-breaking film, nor is it likely to win any awards (not even for its special effects). But it is fun.

—Shane McChesney



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Canadian filmmakers create unnecessary fuss

Forbidden passion fizzles in film

by Ira Nayman

"We the undersigned deeply regret the attempts made by the government of the people's republic of China to curtail the release of its Academy Award nominee *Ju Dou* in its country of origin. We urge the Chinese government to allow *Ju Dou* to be shown throughout China."

By now you've probably heard of the Chinese-Japanese co-production *Ju Dou*. It was Best Foreign Language Film Academy Award nominee for 1990, but there was some controversy over whether it was even eligible for the award since the Chinese government would not allow it to be shown in the country where it was made.

Cineplex Odeon Films has created a petition with the message above to protest the banning of the film. Some of Canada's biggest names, including Norman Jewison, David Cronenberg, Helga Stephenson and Michael Snow have signed the petition, which will be presented to representatives of the Chinese government.

As for the film itself, it's hard to see what all the fuss is about.

Ju Dou is a melodramatic film about an old man, Yang Tain Qing (Li Bao-Tian), who buys a wife, Ju Dou (Gong Li) in order to have a son to leave his printing factory. Unfortunately Qing is



Gong Li (left) and Zhang Yi look tormented in the Chinese film *Ju Dou*. The cinematography is brilliant, but, otherwise, the film comes straight from the Victorian era.

Ju Dou
directed by Zhang Yi-Mou
produced by Xian Film Studio

impotent and, blaming Ju Dou for his inability to have children, beats her mercilessly.

Qing's cousin, Yang Jin-Shan (Zhang Yi), who works in the print shop, falls in love with Ju Dou and they have an affair. He impregnates her; Qing thinks the child is his own. Inevitably the film ends with betrayal, murder

and madness, but it's hard to be overly concerned.

Ju Dou is a nineteenth-century morality play: you know the lovers will be happy for a time, but they must be punished for their moral transgression. Even the tag

line "An erotic tale of forbidden passion" sounds dated, as if Chinese culture had frozen in the Victorian era.

What the film is most definitely not is political. I suppose it shows the struggle between a worker and a member of the bourgeoisie; but that element of the story is so far in the background that you can blink and miss it.

Another thing *Ju Dou* is not is erotic. The few love scenes manage to attain a certain heat, but it isn't sustained: they are buried among scenes of meaningful glances and long discussions of consequences of the characters' actions (a puritan's idea of eroticism).

One area which deserves praise is the cinematography, which is superb. The Chinese countryside is breathtaking; the print shop a whirl of coloured fabrics; the village rooftops a geometric marvel. If that's what you're looking for in a film, the cinematography will more than make up for the pedestrian story.

Without much political content and not being classifiable as pornography, it's hard to understand why the Chinese government would object to *Ju Dou*. Perhaps a Communist government just couldn't stand the thought that one film could be singled out for accolades (all films, like all people, being equally deserving.)

Maybe they just don't like brilliant cinematography.