



Body Heat is truly hot

review: **Body Heat**
by Ken Burke

Well, to tell you the truth, I was kinda leery about going to see **BODY HEAT** at first. The ad campaign seemed to promise a luridly melodramatic potboiler, and I had heard that it was a partial remake of **Double Indemnity**. Let's just say that remakes of classics are things generally safe to mistrust. But by the movie's end, I had been totally won over. **BODY HEAT** is a tight, tense movie cunningly paced to wrap you up in it as the plot coils around you. And yes, it is hot.

The movie uses a conventional Hollywood genre as a starting point - the murder mystery, or more specifically the murder of a spouse by scheming lovers, which eventually becomes their down-fall. With that kind of movie the atmosphere is crucial - it's gotta do more than look right, it has to feel right. And from the fiftyish jazz score to the unbelievably sensual camerawork to the steam given off by William Hurt and Kathleen Turner as the murderous lovers, this movie has that feel down perfectly. Nothing is wasted here. The images roll seductively off the screen in waves throughout,

both lush and taut at the same time.

The film's tension is established quickly, with the meeting of Ned Racine (Hurt) and Mary Walker (Turner). Both characters are on slow smoulder, so when they find their release in each other, it ain't in a handshake. I've never seen sheer overwhelming lust so well done on the screen - there's not much graphic nudity, but lots of skin,

edible and shimmering (sweat has rarely been worn so well). It's not gratuitous, either. The connection between the two is the fuel for the whole movie to feed on, kicking the plot into second gear and taking off.

Hurt and Turner are excellent, but all the minor characters are full-blooded as well, with no stereotypes in a story chock full of possibilities for them. Much of

the credit goes to writer & director Lawrence Kasdan, who also wrote **Raiders of the Lost Ark** and **Continental Divide**. As well as getting great performances from his actors, Kasdan films

them in the colour equivalent of film noir: characters move by moonlight; the blue glare of a welding torch; the seamy red haze of a bar. Even in the day, there's hardly a natural light

shot. Kasdan also has the talent for summing up pages of dialogue in one image - the picture of Hurt and Turner cooling off together in an ice-filled bathtub, still burning underneath, is worth more than a dozen errant references to "the heat" throughout the movie.

And if I haven't said much about the plot, that's because you should be taken on that roller-coaster ride yourself. What seems to be simple at first becomes complicated and important later on. Characters you had forgotten about return to add to the plot's suspense. And, by largely following the point of view of the protagonist, Ned Racine, while panic and tension surrounds him, it also involves the viewer in figuring out what the hell's going on. Quite literally, it isn't possible to guess the ending until the movie's over.

I'm writing all this and I don't even particularly like most movies of this kind. They usually need to have a hell of a lot going for them before I'll even watch them, but **BODY HEAT** had it all - a great cast, fine direction, and a bummer of a plot. It even felt right. Why, I haven't seen a movie like that since ... **Double Indemnity**?

