

Simplification makes *River* run dry

Where the River Runs Black Famous Players
review by Krista Solie

Turning a fable into a movie is difficult. To preserve the tone of the story one must maintain simplicity without becoming simplistic. *Where the River Runs Black* is such a movie. It is a fable about nature. Sometimes this film succeeds in its mission of telling the story simply and elegantly, but at other times the story becomes dull and predictable.

The plot concerns Lazaro (Alessandro Rabelo), a boy who represents nature. His birth is clouded in mystery. His mother is a mysterious woman who can turn into a dolphin and who lives where the river runs black. (Hence the title.) His father, a young priest, discovered her naked while canoeing down the river. He is seduced by her beauty.

Later, when he leaves her, he is punished for this transgression by a giant anaconda which drags him underwater.

The product of this union, Lazaro grows up with his mother and the dolphins, until

a group of greedy gold seekers kill his mother. He ends up in the city where he is befriended by Father O'Reilly (Charles Durning), who was a friend of his father's. Sent to school in the hope he will become civilized, *Where the River Runs Black* resembles Truffaut's *Wild Child*, showing how Lazaro learns how to speak and conform to society.

One day a politician visits the school and Lazaro recognizes him as his mother's murderer. Lazaro runs away and follows the politician back into the jungle. Here the story becomes Walt Disneyish as the politician is attacked by the dolphins and dies, and Lazaro lives the rest of his life in the jungle.

Although the plot is sometimes outlandish, many scenes are presented with an understated grace. The cinematography helps to achieve this quality by being lovely. Of course, it is enhanced by the natural beauty of the Brazilian jungle. The story also uses symbolism to an effective extent. Water imagery abounds in this movie. Lazaro is baptized twice. Once by

his mother, then later by Father O'Reilly. His first steps into civilization are taken when he gingerly put his fingers into a glass of water and then sucks the water from them. He later gains acceptance at school by sprinkling water from a hose onto his classmates during a fight. The Rio Negera, the river where the story takes place, is depicted as being beautiful and mysterious.

Yet at other levels of story-telling, the film does not succeed. The giant anaconda that kills Lazaro's father seems too ferocious as it literally leaps out of the water to attack him. Also, this scene is entirely predictable and the build-up to it is far too long. Although handsome, Alessandro Rabelo is a wooden actor. His voice is too monotone even for a person just learning to speak. The other characters are also flat,

although perhaps they should be simple as we are dealing with a fable. But none of the actors really stands out except for Ajay Naidu. But then again he gets some of the film's best lines as Segundo, Lazaro's humorous sidekick.

The film's balance between being simple and simplistic is sometimes out of kilter. There are times when the story is just too facile for an adult while at the same time being too complex for a child.

Where the River Runs Black is an intriguing film. If one wants to see a film that is visually striking and contains interesting symbolism, one should go. But if one wants to see a film that is straightforward and full of action, this isn't it. *Where the River Runs Black* is perhaps a good opener to films about South America, but it doesn't quite fulfill its form as being a fable.

Blues band won't battle

interview by Randal Smathers

Don Walsh has led Downchild Blues Band for the last 17 years. Last Thursday he arrived from a benefit in Toronto to do two shows for the Silver Bullet Blues Fest. Although there were four bands involved, Walsh stressed that this was not a *Battle of the Bands* type show. "Bands don't battle," he said, "If you want a battle get a football team. They battle."

The band is resurfacing in the West after a relatively quiet period here, when Walsh was "just staying in Toronto, around home. The blues scene is very up around Toronto," he said.

Walsh is back writing and Downchild is doing their tenth album, this one on local label, Stony Plain. "We're in the midst of recording. It'll be done by Christmas and out by late January or early February," said Walsh.

With Walsh's songwriting, the album is "mainly new stuff, although there may be a couple of covers." Singer Tony Flaim is writing as well. "We sort of write together. We help each other," said Walsh. He described a cooperative process, where

one person writes and then the other helps refine the song, rather than a co-writing team.

"It's nice for me to see (Flaim writing). I'm really excited," Walsh said. He explained that he enjoys the continuing contribution from someone who has "been in my band for 10-14 years."

Walsh is the only original Downchild. "We've had lots of turnover," he said, describing a band where a musician may not be available for a specific tour, but rejoins "maybe next time, maybe next year. We keep together because I love what I do."

"It's hard to be objective," said Walsh about the band's evolution over its long history. "The band is very up about itself at this point," said Walsh, "that's really nice to see. From input I get from outsiders . . . and from insiders, this is about the hottest band I've ever been in."

Stylistically, the music is tending towards "rockier blues. It depends on the lineup in the band and also what I happen to be writing, but right now it is rockier blues," said Walsh.

Liberty Silver shines on

by Sherri Ritchie

At sixteen years of age, Liberty Silver was singing backup vocals for one hundred dollars a week. It has been a long haul and a succession of bands for Silver to start getting the recognition she wants.

At twenty-two she broke away from the band scene and struck out on her own. Said Silver, "I got sick and tired of going around the same circuit and seeing the big-timers touring around and living off just their names." A year later in 1985, she was the recipient of two Junos for her single "Somewhere Inside Your Love." And at the age of 24, Silver is now rising to the top.

Although she is not yet where she wants to be in her career, Silver is enjoying her increasing recognition. "It seems to get better and better," she says, "but for every step forward, you take a step back. When you have more success, you have more to deal with." She adds, "Right now there's pressure on the commercial appeal of my music, but there will be a point where I will have creative control over what I write."

Her on-stage performance Tuesday night was definitely dynamic, and the rest of the band effectively hung back to let her personality shine through.

Despite the fact she had the flu, her voice was still fantastic, with her 4½ octave range making for some exciting vocals. Besides the voice, her strong emotion made some of the pieces quite stirring.

Silver had a decent rapport with the audience; joking, talking. She even went out into the crowd and got some of them to sing with her.

However, the show tended to be a bit too big-time for a small club like Andante — the two just didn't fit (which is unfortunate, especially at \$10 a crack). But all in all, it was a well executed show, worth your while if you are interested in seeing a future chart-topper in the flesh.



Liberty Silver photo Rob Schmidt

More Steely than Rosie

Zazu Rosie Vela A&M Records

review by Scott Gordon

There must be either an incredible dearth of talent out there or some very gullible record execs who hand out recording contracts to every Tom, Dick, and fashion model. The latter is the case here.

Rosie Vela does manage to carry this album off quite well, but if she had to do it without legendary Steely Dan producer Gary Katz and The Dan themselves, Walter Becker and Donald Fagen, it is very debatable if she could manage. There is some inspiration here, but not quite enough zing to render it

a great album. As it stands, however, this is a good album by anyone's standards. With some tighter writing, it could have been great, but still it is enjoyable and worth it.

The album, as to be expected, has a Steely Dan feel, but the songs seem to blur into one another and then, without warning, a song jumps out that is highly memorable. What can you do, eh?

The musicianship is impeccable, as to be expected, and Vela's voice is pleasant enough. She croons, she wails, she whimpers, but there seems to be an urge just to let loose and really howl.

And one more thing; Rosie, just what the hell is a 'Homo-corporate Honcho'?

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