

arts & entertainment

Lust, murder and dancing: Tango

by Mark Farmer

Manhood is all about farting, using swear-words in Scrabble and holding cock contests, isn't it? *Tango* asks the question, and you decide. *Tango* takes the viewer on a journey of discovery, music and maybe misogyny from France to Africa, mostly by way of a lime-yellow 1970 station wagon, not exactly the national car of France.

MOVIE REVIEW
Tango
Wormwood's

Paul has a very non-committal attitude toward marriage. He asks whether he can help looking at a beautiful woman's ass as she walks by, or whether it's a crime to sleep around. His wife is of the opinion that yes, it is a crime, and yes, he can help it, and leaves him without a second thought. Together with his uncle, a judge, he blackmails Vincent, who has already done away with his spouse in a biplane with faulty seatbelts, into killing his wife. Vincent isn't a hit man, but he does owe the judge, who leaned on the jury to get him off the hook.

Does it all sound funny? Definitely. Chauvinist? Surprisingly not.

This is a wry, witty, very lighthearted film, and there's no question the women are as smart or smarter than the men — they can also murder with the best of them, and you'll end up asking yourself who really needs freedom in the relationship and who needs commitment, Paul or his wife.

After a slow start, the film gears up, first with a car chase scored to Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries*. A lot of film scenes, like the helicopter attack from *Apocalypse Now*, have been scored to *Ride of the Valkyries*, but before now, never a chase between a Citroen and a BMW. A very surreal, very black — very French? — sense of humour starts creeping up, with a strong dash of the absurd added for taste. Thankfully the subtitles take nothing away from the rich French dialogue that carries all this humour.

In *Tango*, things tend to happen in real life as soon as they come up in casual conversation, like the report of Paul's wife getting run over by a bus, or Vincent's love interest blowing her husband's head off over fish sticks at the cafe. Most of the film takes place as a series of short monologues punctuated by outrageous takes on life, like the observation by Paul's uncle that "A good handjob beats a bad marriage."

Thus the happy trio drives to Africa, but Paul begins to question the whole sordid affair. Luckily his uncle is there to bludgeon any guilt pangs, because "In my book, wife killing isn't really murder," as he puts it. It becomes clear that the uncle is the real instigator, and the only one who's never been married. He seems content to sit in a hotel room with a bunch of cognac miniatures and watch a porn flick.

The actors are all pretty much unknown in North America, except for a cameo by one of the big-time Chanel models, but they are more than competent, and prevent the film from sinking into something of an anti-girl club — kind of a screen version of the Red Green Show. Paul is a self-assured philanderer who never questions his right to cheat. Vincent is a dubious hit man at best, and acts as Paul's conscience, trying to talk him out of the murder. The Uncle is gruff and opportunistic. He's Paul's ego and his libido, playing a likeable devil to Vincent's angel.

Another plus in this film is the rich scenery of Languedoc-Roussillon, the region in France where the film takes place. Then add the *Tango* music that takes you from scene to scene in the heap of a car Paul calls a station wagon. It's like a

guide to the people and the landscape, passionate and zesty, with that seductive Gallic charm that made the French a romantic legend.

Some people who watch *Tango* are going to get offended at what they see as male chauvinism. After all, Paul justifies cheating based on the inevitability of male sex drive, while his uncle thinks marriage is an

all-male prison. But the film doesn't take these buffoons seriously, and we see Paul slip into hallucinations of jealousy and despair as he comes to see his own loneliness. He comes to the realization that "there's something fateful about the tango..." I think that means it takes two. A-

Tango is at Wormwood's Cinema on Gottingen Street, Sept. 9 - 15

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