

# Connery film weak on premise

by Sheona Jarvis

Even diehard Sean Connery fans might find his new project a bitter pill to swallow. *Medicine Man* claims to be concerned with the problems of the world's disappearing rainforest, yet focuses on everything but.

Connery plays Dr. Robert Campbell, a disillusioned biochemist who has sequestered himself in the heart of the Amazon rainforest. He accidentally stumbles across a cure for cancer, then loses it.

Lorraine Bracco costars as Dr. Ray Crane, his research assistant. Together, they must find the original formula for the miracle drug before the destruction of the forest by a construction company is completed.

The movie is tiresome and dull. There is no real suspense and very little action to redeem the weak storyline. The plot jumps disjointedly from scene to scene with no apparent connection.

The dialogue is unrealistic and the characters fail to transport the audience into the world in which they live. The interplay between Bracco and Connery is disappointing; the two scream at each other throughout the entire film, then miraculously fall in

## FILM

*Medicine Man*  
directed by John McTiernan  
starring Sean Connery and Lorraine Bracco  
Hollywood Pictures/Cinergi/Bouma Vista

love at the end.

Connery plays Campbell with his usual sardonic wit, but the dialogue leaves the talented actor little to work with. When they go to see the tribe's original medicine man, for instance, Bracco tells Connery, "Don't call me by my given name."

"Don't you like it?" he says.

"Yeah, I like it," is her reply. Then the scene cuts away to the next morning. Dialogue like this makes no sense.

Things happen in the plot which are not adequately dealt with or explained. The best (or worst) example is the blue line tattooed on Bracco's face by the medicine man while she is sleeping; why he put it there or what it symbolizes is never explained. Bracco finds out it will never come off, yet she doesn't get upset; in fact, she never really acknowledges it.

Bracco cannot match Connery's extraordinary screen presence. She generates none of the sexual chemistry of someone like Michelle Pfeiffer in

*The Russia House*. She is completely unbelievable, and her voice (second only to Melanie Griffith's in ability to irritate) is a whine.

The cinematography was the true highpoint of the film, with beautiful widescreen shots of the rainforest. The contrast between the beauty of the landscape and its decimation by outside forces is sharply highlighted throughout. A fire sequence at the end of the film is an awesome spectacle.

Here, again, though, the film is unrealistic. The next morning, people are more upset about the destruction of the forest or its aboriginal inhabitants.

*Medicine Man* is a poor attempt at addressing a problem of great importance. Its ultimate message is that we should not destroy the rainforest because it contains a miraculous cancer cure.

Not enough importance is placed on the rainforest as the habitat of aborigines or thousands of fragile ecosystems. Although on the surface *Medicine Man* appears to deal with what capitalist society is doing to the rainforest, the theme is negated by an inappropriate focus.



Director John McTiernan has finally found something that mutes the intense screen presence of Sean Connery: the Brazilian rainforest. Here Connery graciously shares the screen with Lorraine Bracco and several thousand year-old trees.

# Without mocking specific stereotypes, film is Sweet

by Pedram Fouladianpour

It may look superficial, but only to a superficial audience. It may seem boring, but only to a tasteless audience.

I have seen very few comedies recently that don't mock specific stereotypes. Mike Leigh's *Life is Sweet* is one of them, a humorous story of a British working-class family.

Wendy (Alison Steadman) works in a clothing store for babies and teaches children disco dancing. Andy (Jim Broadfoot) is a chef who wants to work for himself. They have twin daughters, Natalie (Claire Skinner), a calm, rational plumber, and Nicola (Jane Horrocks), a hyper, hysterical

## FILM

*Life is Sweet*  
directed by Mike Leigh  
starring Alison Steadman and Jim Broadfoot  
produced by Film Four International

anorexic. To all that should be added family friend Aubrey (Timothy Spall).

Mike Leigh, who has directed almost 40 works for British film, television and theatre (including *Meantime* and *High Hopes*), has created a complicated situation beneath the simple appearance of the film. Every character is meticulously scrutinized by his camera.

Leigh deserves praise for his ability to advance his story with images,

which shift from realistic to highly stylized.

*Life is Sweet* owes a great part of its charm to its superb cast. Steadman and Horrocks portray characters with contrasting traits; by controlling the interaction between them, Leigh balances their performances.

Leigh uses irony and humour to comment on the characters' situations and their interaction with their metaphorical surroundings.

*Life is Sweet* examines clashing moral philosophies without having the characters deliver philosophical lectures. Leigh's mixture of ordinary and bizarre characters and situations makes the film a unique vision of human life.

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