

Comedy depicts moral lesson of Vietnam

Good Morning Vietnam
Touchstone Pictures
West Mall 5, Capitol square 4

review by June Chua

0600 hours: "Gooooood morning Vietnam!" exclaims the boisterous voice of Adrian Cronauer (Robin Williams) as he cuts the still morning air. Indeed, this is the "demilitarized zone" where Williams' crazy antics literally explode on the air.

This film serves two purposes: first, it satirizes American involvement in Vietnam by showing the noncombatant side; secondly, it is a showcase for Williams' talent.

Upon his arrival, Cronauer starts off by playing "unauthorized" rock music. This incites criticism from his immediate superiors, Lt. Hank and Sergeant-Major Dickerson. But Cronauer remains the rebel throughout, making fun of the strict, authoritarian views of his superiors. This reveals the distorted military perspectives of Hawk and Dickerson, as Hawk demands to be saluted because "that's what being a higher rank is all about."

Yet, in the midst of all this good-natured fun, there lies deep criticism of American intervention and of the military itself. For instance, when Cronauer attempts to befriend Tuan, brother of a beautiful girl Cronauer is interested in, Tuan calls him phoney, like all Americans who "come and want something they can't get." The film also exposes the extreme censorship of any news that would demoralize the troops, to which Cronauer asks: "...are you afraid people are going to find out there's a war going on?"

In addition, the film has many cynical moments. The most memorable is when Cronauer plays "What a Wonderful World" with shots of bloody clashes, terrorism in the streets and bombing of villages. This is

contrasted with tender images of urban and rural life: old men playing cards, naked boys taking a shower, women in the rice fields and bustling marketplaces.

Especially funny moments include the times when Cronauer tries teaching the natives American street talk; though somewhat racist, it is counterbalanced by the film's admonishment of Americans themselves. Also comical is when he goes out on a date with Tuan's sister, which involves her whole family ("My God, this could be ugly"), and when Cronauer edits a tape of Richard Nixon's speech.

This film succeeds in presenting both the American and Vietnamese outlook. It shows Cronauer giving an impromptu show to young, nervous troops going into combat — unsure if they'll return. He asks their names and where they came from, giving the soldiers a sense of identity instead of treating them just as bodies in uniform. However, one unforgettable moment burns in my mind, and that is when Tuan makes an impassioned speech full of hate, suffering and anguish as he claims, "...we're not human to them (the American military)" with tears streaming down his agonized and embittered face.

Nevertheless, Robin Williams can sometimes be an irritating shadow that overcasts the real issues in the film. One statement of Cronauer's: "My God it's Mardi Gras and I'm on the main float," pretty much summarizes Williams' role in the movie.

Most significant is the Wizard of Oz theme that underscores Cronauer's experiences in Vietnam. Although he makes fun of "Hanoi Hannah" as the Wicked Witch of the North, the Kansas in this film is Vietnam which has been devastated by the dark, indifferent tornado of the U.S. By the end, clear-cut notions of who is Good and who represents Evil are clouded by gray areas. *Good Morning Vietnam* is an entertaining movie that provides a moral lesson to us all — one should see it both for the history lesson and to see Robin Williams at his zaniest best.

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Covers still hot and Groovier

**One Night Stand
Flamin' Groovies
Fringe**

review by Mike Spindloe

"**W**hat becomes a legend most?" asked Lou Reed once, and here are the Flamin' Groovies, some 20 years of cult status after their inception, still pumping out the same kind of good times garage-band classics that made them semi-famous.

Their answer to the musical question, however, is both becoming and unbecoming by turns. On the plus side, *One Night Stand* shows that the band can still sound exuberant and fresh. The album was recorded live in the studio in a mere 15 hours and mixed in only 12 hours. The only overdubbing is on the vocals, so the live sound remains virtually intact.

The record rocks along in a solid groove and you know that these guys believe in what they're doing, but unfortunately, except

for reminding us that rock and roll is supposed to be fun rather than a corporate design, there's no particular musical reason for the existence of this record.

Maybe the fun quotient is or should be enough, but basically there is nothing new about this album, despite the sleeve's claim that these are "brand new recordings." New recordings they are: of four old Groovies' classics and another half dozen cover tunes mostly culled from the sixties staple garage band repertoire. The most recent song, in fact, is a cover of the Hoodoo Gurus' "Bittersweet", returning a compliment to a band which was influenced by the Groovies and also an oblique reference to the fact that the Groovies are now based out of the Gurus' native Australia.

There is nothing really the matter with *One Night Stand*; it would have been nice to see these guys maybe bother to write at least a couple of new songs. On the other hand, if *One Night Stand* succeeds in introducing a new generation to Groovies' classics like "Shake Some Action" and "Teenage Head", it may be worth the trip after all.

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