



BY TYLER HAWKINS

I like the beach, as much as the next guy. There's something about the sand and sun combined with endless sights that produce that why-is-summer-so-short feeling.

Upon seeing the first few breathtaking scenes of the beach used as the set for the movie "The Beach," those summer feelings drifted back as easily as the words for "Surfin' U.S.A."

The island used for the filming is called Phi Phi Le, a small island off Phuket, Thailand. According to the director and producer, Danny Boyle and Andrew Macdonald respectively, "the beach

was quite neglected but it had exquisite white sand." So, they played god and planted over 100 coconut trees and tampered with the sand dunes in an attempt to beautify an already heavenly island, hastening the erosional patterns and essentially washing the beach away. In the meantime, they shot a pop-movie.

Leonardo DiCaprio is hot. With his shirt off and sporting a sweet tan, DiCaprio powers his way into an exciting yet haunting character portrayal. He plays Richard, a young American backpacker who arrives in Thailand with adventure and his urbanized mind. He encounters a young French couple, Etienne

(Guillaume Canet) and Francoise (Virginie Ledoyen) along with a crazed, sun ravaged traveler named Daffy (Robert Carlyle).

Daffy describes to Richard, basically within seconds of meeting, a secret island, a perfect beach interrupted by tourists. The day after, Richard finds a hand drawn map to the island, pinned to his door, and the dead body of Daffy in the next room.

He persuades Etienne and Francoise to come with him, and they set off to the island — swimming across open sea, crawling past armed guards, who are actually farmers watching over fields of dope, and finally jumping off a gigantic waterfall.

What they discover on the is-

land that reminds me of the scene from *Easy Rider* where Fonda and Hopper get welcomed in to the hippie commune.

Anyway, the island doesn't turn out to be all that perfect. Petty jealousy and personal conflict ferment to create rivalry and some tragic events fragment the community. Richard finds himself increasingly isolated and disturbed, having flashbacks of Daffy — (Why did he really leave the island?).

I'm not going to give anymore away, but I will say that if you watch "Lord of the Flies" and "Apocalypse Now" one after the other, you might understand what Doyle is trying to say. Simply, *The Beach* is about the inner journey, the search for real emo-

tion and answers, and each person's confrontation with their own heart of darkness.

DiCaprio also entertains the viewers with some sarcastic humour and his one captivating line, "I will not die today!" coming straight from an epic moment in *Braveheart*.

One thing that still strikes me as odd is why no one has taught DiCaprio how to smoke properly. He just doesn't hold up to Sean Penn, Robert Deniro, or Al Pacino, who all demonstrate the cool way to inhale.

So, what's the verdict I say? I liked it enough to suggest you see this flick kids (unless you care about big movie companies wrecking pristine islands, then boycott it).

Michael Douglas

Undependable.
Unpredictable.
Unforgettable.

Wonder Boys

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