

Angelina Jolie channels video-game adventurer Lara Croft for "Lara Croft: Tomb Raider," and she makes the electronic heroine believable.

'Raider' Adapts Game Tastefully

By JONATHAN MILLER
Online Editor

In an Indiana Jones-meets-Bond girl adventure, Angelina Jolie delivers a believable performance as the ever-beautiful, ever-cunning tomb raider, Lara Croft.

"Lara Croft: Tomb Raider" doesn't shoot itself in the foot by attempting to recreate a scenario from any of the Eidos Interactive game titles; instead, the film's writers weave a new adventure around Croft and adversary Manfred Powell (Iain Glen) as they compete to obtain an ancient artifact buried in the far corners of the world.

Refreshingly, Jolie portrays Croft without the sense of sexual exploitation that could have otherwise ruined the adventuresome appeal of the film. Though appearing in traditional Lara Croft gear, Jolie does not replicate all the proportions of the cyber Lara, adding a very real dimension to the character and a break from the gravity-defying, D-cup antics of the video game's heroine.

Director Simon West decided instead to get all the sex appeal for the video game's fan following — in this case, a shower scene — out of the way in the film's first five minutes. It's like West wanted to achieve something closer in spirit to the "Powerpuff Girls" than "V.I.P." — where the attraction of strong women kicking butt is more powerful than the same women sticking their own out.

"Lara Croft: Tomb Raider" instead challenges gender roles, as Croft is very much her own woman with definite goals and a host of men at her service, a welcome change to the status quo. But despite the lack of innuendo or peek-a-boo camera shots, viewers watching the film because of their appreciation of the video game will not be disappointed.

The sounds of Croft's dual pistols firing sounds the same as the game's and Croft

delivers acrobatic rolls and moves that look as if they were choreographed directly from cyber-Lara's movements.

Enduring three months of vigorous training in kickboxing, dog sledding and weapons training, Jolie is Lara Croft. Jolie performed many of her own stunts including the exquisite bungee ballet that has made it into many of the "Lara Croft: Tomb Raider" trailers.

As Croft, Jolie does not come off as a perfect hero, and gives emotion to the bits and bytes that made the video game so successful.

Fellow tomb raider Alex West (Daniel Craig) throws a chink into Croft's cool exterior. Their unspoken dialogue throughout the film is effective because their relationship is established but not established, leaving one to question their past together.

The action sequences and special effects are reminiscent of "The Mummy" and "Tomorrow Never Dies" with breakneck motorcycle driving and high-powered weaponry. The film was shot in Cambodia and Iceland (though portrayed as Siberia in the film) and on the famed 007 Stage at England's Pinewood Studios. These exotic locales provide for a beautiful setting for which Croft and Powell to do battle.

But make no mistake — the film is far from perfect. Jon Voight, Jolie's real life father, stars as Croft's father, Lord Croft. The dynamic that this true-to-life father-daughter acting duo should have landed perfectly seems more like acting than it should have been, providing the only real Achilles' heel in the film.

Their relationship seems more forced than natural, which is surprising considering their real-life relationship.

This film, though entertaining, will never appear as one of the ten best films ever made. That is not its purpose. Its purpose is to bring to life Lara Croft, and initiate a silver screen version of the ever-popular video game. It succeeds.

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Ex-Milemarker drummer Ben Davis left the band to stay in Chapel Hill. Davis' first post-band album, *The Hushed Patterns of Relief*, is the result.

Davis Leaves Drum Kit For Elegant Patterns

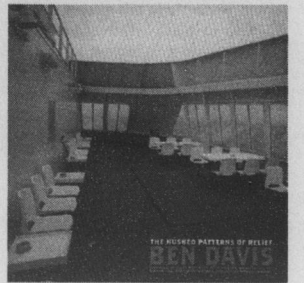
By ASHLEY ATKINSON
Senior Writer

When local faves Milemarker left Chapel Hill for the greener post-rock pastures of Chicago last summer, drummer Ben Davis stayed behind. Letting the band that he had helped found in 1997 move on to bigger things without him couldn't have been easy — but Davis wanted to remain in Chapel Hill to raise his newborn son.

And what began when he started to write songs for the piano alone in his bedroom soon evolved into a full-fledged ensemble. Davis rounded up an all-star cast of Chapel Hill up-and-comers — including the Comas' Nicole Gehweiler and Matt Long of the Mayflies U.S.A. — and solicited both their creative input and their musical talents.

The end result is *The Hushed Patterns of Relief*, a lushly orchestrated but melancholy collection of tracks that comes across as a very personal reflection of a turbulent time in Davis' life. (He states as much in the liner notes and reinforces it in his doleful lyrics.)

Fans used to Davis behind the drum set may be surprised at his talent as a songwriter and frontman — and at the considerably less frenetic nature of his music as compared to his previous



bands. Whereas Milemarker and Davis' earlier outfit, Sleepytime Trio, were both on the loud and frenzied side of the musical spectrum, his solo work is quiet and introspective.

Davis has crafted a set of melodic, piano-based songs whose occasional repetitiveness is offset by intricate instrumentation — his companions add cello, organ and a Rhodes synthesizer to the standard rock lineup. Davis' lap steel guitar is lovely on "Misdirection," and the Rhodes works to good effect on the sorrowful "Wrestling Won't Help." The album's piano accompaniment and plaintive tone is sometimes reminiscent of West Coast indie stars Death Cab for Cutie, but not in a derivative way.

Stand-out tracks include the beautiful, swelling "Poised and Determined." "In a hushed room I stood to my feet/ Poised and determined to make this exit neat/ And there's another exciting chase scene I see/ And you seem to be starring in it with me."

The symphonic "Coats Need Rest Too" and "Your Terms Are Now Mine" are likewise gorgeous and fervent. The album is well-produced without being over-produced, and these slow, dreamy dirges are a fresh departure from the high-octane pop that has been occupying the spotlight in Chapel Hill for the past couple of years.

In light of this, while *The Hushed Patterns of Relief* is both heartfelt and intense, it's not exactly stimulating — this isn't music for a sunny afternoon, unless maybe you hate sunny afternoons. It lends itself more to listening in the contemplative fashion that Davis wrote it — alone, in a bedroom, late at night.

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