

Film mixes riveting storyline, powerful message

One False Move

Bill Paxton, Cynda Williams, Billy Bob Thornton

directed by Carl Franklin

Chelsea
968-3005

★★★★

Every once in a while, there comes a movie that simply has to be made.

One False Move is such a movie.

Chronicling the most deep-seated conflicts that exist in America today — the basic conflict between blacks and whites and the conflict between rural and urban mentalities — *One False Move* is a film to be reckoned with.

The movie opens in Los Angeles with Fantasia (Cynda Williams, *Mo' Better Blues*) and her two partners in crime, Ray (Billy Bob Thornton) and Pluto (Michael Beach), carrying out a well-planned drug heist. Five people die, and it would've been more if Fantasia hadn't acted compassionately and without the knowledge of her partners.

She then flees with the high-strung, coked-up Ray and his buddy, Pluto, the

movie

JOHN STATON

ice-cold sociopath with a 150 IQ who goes about the business of stabbing a teenage girl to death casually, like he's gutting a fish.

The scene soon switches to Star City, Ark., a sleepy Southern town where Sheriff Dale "Hurricane" Dixon (big brother Chet from *Weird Science*) has had "10 years of bustin' peepin' Toms and stop sign runners."

With help from two jaded L.A. detectives (who are actually good guys in this one), Dixon finds out that the trio is heading his way, setting up a gory, realistic ending.

But while the storyline is no less than riveting, what's important about *One False Move* are the themes.

Black-white relationships abound, both healthy and destructive. There's Fantasia, a mulatto, and her abusive white boyfriend, Ray; there's Ray and his cohort Pluto, who exist in constant suspicion of each other; there are the two cops, Dud and John, who are basically alike except their difference in skin color; and then there's Fantasia and Hurricane, who have a secret past that



Fantasia (Cynda Williams) and Ray (Billy Bob Thornton) are on the run (and thirsty) in 'One False Move'

is the crux of the film.

So what does all this mean? According to Thornton, who co-wrote the script, all the racial stuff is "just there," but that's hard to believe when a little mulatto boy's birthday cake is chocolate with white icing.

There's something going on between blacks and whites, in the film and in America, something akin to the cli-

ched love-hate relationship. I think blacks and whites want to like each other, but there are major, unspoken obstacles that keep it from happening. In *One False Move*, we begin to understand, however vaguely, this paradox.

More clearly, the film also examines the radical differences between rural and urban peoples. If there is a weak point in the film, it is that "country

folks" are stereotyped to a degree, but this actually serves a purpose, as we discover later.

Ultimately, *One False Move* is a must-see if you're into intelligent, entertaining movies. I know, I know, that's hard to believe because it was co-written by and stars a guy named Billy Bob, but seeing this film is one false move you won't make.

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Sneakers

Robert Redford, Sidney Poitier, Ben Kingsley, Dan Aykroyd, River Phoenix

directed by Phil Alden Robinson

Plaza I-III
967-4737

★★★★

Seeing *Sneakers* will be a reaffirming experience for those who have once again lost their faith in Hollywood after yet another summer showcase of slick, soulless moneymakers. True, they really don't come much slicker or, for that matter, much more Hollywood than *Sneakers*, but this movie is done the old-fashioned way, hearkening back to a time when big Hollywood projects meant magic, not mediocrity.

You might think that with all the potential for ego here — considering a cast that includes Robert Redford, Sidney Poitier, Dan Aykroyd, River Phoenix and Ben Kingsley — the final product could get lost among the superstar names (case in point: *Ishtar*). But these savvy vets couldn't work together more smoothly if they were a traveling actor's troupe. That's why this movie is so simply successful, on so many different levels — all the pieces fit together just so.

movie

NED DIRLIK

For one thing, the action is built around a clever reunion that any scriptwriter would find loaded with intriguing potential. The players are two obviously gifted computer "hackers" who got busted in the late '60s trying to do things like break into Richard Nixon's campaign fund (via computers). When one goes to prison and the other gets away, the confrontation is set, even though it's decades (or, cinematically speaking, about an hour) away.

Robert Redford is Martin Brice, the one that got away, and he's spent his life on the run, working with other high-tech outlaws and one discharged government agent (Sidney Poitier). Though decidedly low-profile, this gang of "sneakers" (and, like me, you'll have to forgive the dimly cheesy title) has built up quite a reputation by breaking into a company's high-tech defenses, under the contract of that company, in order to discover if security needs beefing up.

But when two men come to their HQ claiming to work for the U.S. government and possessing dangerous info on Brice's shady past (which he has tried to cover up with a completely new identity), the relatively harmless gang of industrial pirates is forced to take on

a risky new assignment.

Without revealing too much about what happens next (because this is when the movie takes off with a bang), I will say that most of the suspense comes from a little black box of incredible power — by the time Brice's old partner in crime (Ben Kingsley) comes on the scene, the suspense is no-holds-barred excitement.

I think that both mathematicians and spies might find a few of the film's premises based on some pretty shaky logic. Once again, to go into great detail would reveal too much, but suffice it to say that if this little black box was at all feasible, the existing world order would probably be radically altered. But this movie is so much fun — and the actors are clearly having as good a time on screen as any audience could see — that it's impossible not to forgive its eccentricities.

Just as in his earlier *Field of Dreams*, director Robinson worries more about creating some magic than reproducing reality.

ratings

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