

Acting brightens 'Dreams'

Not all movies have to be happy-go-lucky affairs, but this one went too far the other way — and for no purpose other than sensationalism.

'Chocolat': Skillful film about sensitive subject

France is currently experiencing a violent upsurge of racial strife, a legacy of its former attempts to dominate Third World countries. As a white French woman raised in West Africa during the last days of French colonial occupation, Denis saw firsthand the roots of conflict between white Europeans and black Africans. "Chocolat" expresses, simply, a child's eye view of colonial misery.

Although these are supposed to be France's memories, the child herself remains mostly in the background. By unobtrusively observing grownups at work and play, she

Although sympathetic to the Europeans' viewpoint, Denis is clearly on the side of the Africans. In the film's exuberant final shot, which deserves to become famous, she offers a celebratory vision of post-colonial Africans enjoying their freedom.

Wisely, however, she insists on making this France's story, not Protee's. It's up to the African writers and filmmakers, she implies, to give us his version of things.

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