

MOVIES

Suspenseful 'Bound' bends film noir formula



JOHN MONAGHAN

in bed together, literally and figuratively, plotting to rip someone

off. What makes 'Bound' so unusual is that this familiar 'film noir' archetype is actually a woman. The lesbian twist, along with some unusual camera work, keeps us watching this first effort by writer/directors Larry and Andy Wachowski. 'Bound' isn't as clever as it thinks it is, but it has some nice flourishes, usually involving the camera. The movie is awash in deep blacks, muted browns and blues, as close as you can get to making a black-and-white movie in color.

So when the blood comes, and it seems to arrive in buckets, you're all the more shocked. It's a real mess, and it's actually across apartment-house floors, spilled slow-motion into a sea of drips white-motio and saturates thick Oriental rugs. I guarantee you'll never be able to look at a pair of pruning shears the same way again.

Jennifer Tilly, best remembered as a gangster's girlfriend in 'Bullets Over Broadway,' plays another one here. This time the willowy actress with the baby voice is Violet, girl-

friend of Mafioso Caesar (Joe Pantolano), who just happens to have a suitcase of literally laundered (and ironed) money in the apartment. Corky, working as a plumber and painter in the apartment next door, gets sucked into a scheme to take the money. When Caesar discovers it missing, he'll have no choice but to run. According to Violet, the total take should exceed two million dollars.

'Bound' should remind you of a lot of other movies, especially the classic 'film noir' dramas 'Double and Indemnity' and 'The Postman Always Rings Twice.' There's also a great deal of Hitchcock here, especially in Don Davis' music, which takes its cues from Bernard Herrmann and 'North By Northwest.'

Those other movie making brothers, the Coens, also seem to be lurking around every corner

of this complicated mystery. Remember that their first feature, 'Blood Simple,' was a similarly claustrophobic study of unsafe sex and violent murder.

What makes the Wachowski brothers different from the Coens is sense of humor, or at least well-drawn irony. The only chuckles here come from Caesar, who catches on Violet, the total take should exceed two million dollars.

They can't help themselves from staging elaborate shots. When the camera shoots Corky from a high angle, dwarfing her on the way into the apartment building, you know that fate is playing a major hand.

Other shots are there simply for show, including a multiple image shot through a wall of glass bricks. The performances are fine, proving you're not too irritated by Tilly's voice, which

you'd hardly be able to listen to in real life without stifling a laugh. Gershon's con, with her full lips, dirty leather jacket, and rusted Chevy truck, effectively turns the tables on a woman's place in the movies.

The gender-bending concept remains the best thing about 'Bound,' which otherwise takes itself way too seriously. While their movie is occasionally cool and often suspenseful, the Wachowskis have forgotten that even the bloodiest movies need to have a sense of fun.

John Monaghan welcomes your calls and comments. You can listen to him on Dave Dixon's Radio Show AM 1270, WHY?, 8 p.m. to midnight Saturdays. To leave John a voice mail message, dial (313) 953-2017 on a touch-tone phone, mailbox 1866.

GUIDE TO THE MOVIES

Grid of movie listings for various theaters including AMC Theaters, General Cinema, Showcase Theatres, United Artists Theatres, and others. Each listing includes theater name, address, phone, showtimes, and movie titles.



Suspense thriller: Corky (Gina Gershon, left) and Violet (Jennifer Tilly) discuss their options in the Wachowski brothers' film, 'Bound.'

Advertisement for 'Our House' energy conservation show. Features a large image of a coffee mug with the text 'Sit Down With Our House' and promotional text about the show on WDIV-TV, Channel 4.