

Sultry 'Femme Fatale' goes for shock, not plot

BY JEFF ANTHONY KRUG
CORRESPONDENT

Boiling over with sexually
erotic tension, *Femme Fatale* is
more of a porno film than film
noir.

The movie begins with jewel
thief Laure Ash (Rebecca
Romijn-Stamos, best known as
blue-skinned Mystique in 2000's
X-Men) watching 1944's *Double
Indemnity* in the nude, taking
lessons on how to be a seductress
from the late, great Barbara
Stanwyck.

Laure and her fellow jewel
thieves — one whose character's
name was never revealed but is
listed in the credits as Black Tie
(Erik Ebanuany) and Racine
(Edouard Montoute) — attend
the premiere of director Régis
Wargnier's (playing himself)
East-West at the Cannes Film
Festival in France. Wargnier is
seen with a ravishing brunette
who is wearing an elaborate
piece of golden jewelry that ends
in a 59-carat diamond snaking
strategically around her upper
body.

Wargnier's escort is then lured
into the restroom by Laure, who
robs her by seducing her, deftly
removing her expensive jewelry
shirt/bra and replacing it with a

decoy. This scene really pushed
the boundaries of good taste.
When the heist goes south,
Laure double-crosses her cohorts
even though Black Tie has her
passport.

However, through an incredi-
ble stroke of luck, she happens
upon a look-alike named Lily
(also played by Romijn-Stamos)
who commits suicide. Stealing
her passport, she heads to
America where she meets promi-
nent businessman Bruce Watts
(Peter Coyote), whom she mar-
ries.

Seven years pass and Watts
becomes the French
ambassador. For obvious rea-
sons, Laure avoids the limelight,
especially in her old stomping
grounds. Enter paparazzi
Nicolas Barlo (Antonio
Banderas), who snaps a photo of
Laure, which is published in
tabloids all over Europe. Black
Tie and Racine vow revenge and
that's when things really get
messy up.

The story — which would have
had potential if director Brian
De Palma had focused on it,
instead of Romijn-Stamos get-
ting undressed and engaging in
yet another graphic sex scene —
becomes convoluted as every-
thing turns out to be (gasp!) a



Rebecca Romijn-Stamos stars in the contemporary film noir *Femme Fatale*, also starring Antonio Banderas.

dream, an old Hollywood
clique. Even the line she says to
Banderas at the very end is
another tired cliché.

The whole thing reminded me
of a *Choose Your Own*
Adventure novel, where readers
can decide to go to Ending No. 1
or Ending No. 2.

Alongside 2000's *Mission to
Mars* and 1998's *Snake Eyes*, this
is De Palma's third lousy film in a
row (fourth if you count 1996's
over-rated Tom Cruise remake of
Mission: Impossible, never mind
the fact it was one of the year's
top-grossing films).
Best known for his voyeuristic

style and Hitchcock-esque cam-
era angles, De Palma seems to be
rehashing two of his previous sex
thrillers — 1980's *Dressed to Kill*
and 1984's *Body Double* — with
a dash of 1999's dementedly
pointless *Eye of the Beholder*
(with Evan McGregor and
Ashley Judd) thrown in.

What's sad is De Palma can
direct a good movie. Remember
his 1976 adaptation of *Carrie*,
Stephen King's debut
novel? And while, admittedly,
1987's *The Untouchables*, star-
ring Kevin Costner, Sean
Connery, Andy Garcia, and
Robert DeNiro, was historically
inaccurate (i.e., mob hitman
Frank Nitti's death), it was highly
entertaining and did well at the
box office. He needs to focus
more on story value rather than
shock value.

And Banderas — who got top
billing despite the fact he doesn't
have much of a part because he
shows up nearly 30 minutes into
the movie — also has starred in
some garbage lately. This fall's
Ballistic: Ecks vs. Sever flopped,
as did 2001's *Original Sin*. This
summer's *Spy Kids 2: The Island
of Lost Dreams* may have had
made a lot of money, but the
story was lame. His role in this
flick was a far cry from 1999's
The Mask of Zorro and 1996's
Evita.

Overall, I'm surprised *Femme
Fatale* wasn't rated NC-17 instead
of R, considering the language,
nudity, and gratuitous sex
scenes. Spend your money on
something else. Or better yet,
stay home and read a book.

EMINEM

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Which, of course we knew
was going to happen all along.
Not that this ruins the movie,
but maybe just the tiniest bit of

unpredictability here might
have given *8 Mile* a certain edge
advantage that it needs. It's not
that we root against Jimmy, of
course, it's just that we don't
particularly root for him
because we know going in that
he is going to succeed and in the

end reach beyond the boundary
that *8 Mile* represents.

With its haunting images of
the Motor City (the tattered,
parking garage that was once
the grand Michigan Theater;
the crumbling bars, liquor
stores, tattoo parlors; the gritty

street corners; the skeletal
buildings; the splintery old
homes, and much more) *8 Mile*
consistently engages the eye.
Shadowy, noir-ish hues (along
with splashes of blood red) and
lighting that enhances the cold
nightmarish look make Detroit

seem like a place that has rarely
seen a summer's day.
By far the best thing about *8
Mile* is Eminem himself who
turns in a knock out perfor-
mance as Jimmy Smith. He's an
absolutely riveting presence and
when he finally gets down to

"doing his thing" he kicks out all
the stops, bringing an energy
and dynamism to the screen
that is simply dazzling to watch.

Vicki Diaz is a Livonia resident who
writes about books and film for the
Observer & Eccentric.

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