

# Flames only flicker in film 'Fires Within'



**PASS THE POPCORN**  
This is a film that fairly drips with earnestness, its opening frames noting the Cuban government denies the existence of political prisoners. This is juxtaposed by the strange coding of usually blonde British actress Greta Scacchi as the Cuban wife of a political prisoner. It's to her credit that she doesn't do that badly with the little she has been given in the script.

The price for political beliefs that defy a dictatorship, in this case Fidel Castro's regime in Cuba, are at the heart of the 1991 film "Fires Within."  
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"Fires Within" begins with Scacchi, who has fled to Miami, receiving a marriage proposal from her boyfriend, played by Vincent D'Onofrio. He was the fisherman who rescued her and her small daughter from the barely floating raft they used to slip out of Cuba. D'Onofrio has become a surrogate father for the girl, whose father was arrested on a political prisoner. He wants a family and family traditions.

As luck and movies would have it, almost simultaneously the Cuban government has decided to release a group of political prisoners and send them off to Miami. Scacchi's husband, played by Jimmy Smits, is among the arriving prisoners after serving eight years of a 20-year sentence.

The film uses flashbacks to illustrate the couple's life in Cuba, where Scacchi argued with Smits and tried to convince him not to pass out the political leaflets which lead to his arrest. Despite her arguments, Smits refuses a "rehabilitation" which would have led to his release and undisturbed visits.

The script raises a lot of issues that it never pursues. After eight years on her own, the wife has made a new life and isn't the same person her husband knew before.

After hearing that her goal is to buy a house, Smits comments with a tinge of envy on how well his wife has done without him. It wasn't much of a struggle based on what you see in the film, except for a boy, a friend and a factory job that must pay pretty darn well.

The husband and boyfriend argue, but the husband and wife don't seem to love much to say to one another. She doesn't ask and he doesn't volunteer anything about his experiences in prison or anything else about the intervening eight years. Or the wife and her boyfriend.

It was particularly disappointing since director Gillian Armstrong is responsible for one of my all-time favorite movies, "My Brilliant Career." I expected a bit more fire and life in a film she directed.

Oh, and another small thing that I found irritating about this movie is you cannot quite figure what year it is taking place. Sometimes there is a very '60s look and feel, other times it seems contemporary.

"Fires Within" is available on video cassette at local video stores.

# Mooshka from page 6A

"It doesn't feel that weird for me," he said. "There's less pressure before the show. In a band, there's more variables that can go wrong. It's just you."  
Therein lies Mooshka's greatest asset and liability. His acoustic guitar playing is intense and riveting. His voice is sincere, but drowned out at times by the din of the nightclub crowd such as this evening at Griffin's Grill.  
A majority of Mooshka's shows have been on an opening act for other local bands at clubs such as Lil's and Griffin's Grill. His set list includes 15 to 17 songs, including a few Phineas Gage numbers "Boneste" and "In the Mirror" done acoustically.  
The songs Mooshka's most proud of are the ones he's written since last summer.

"I feel they're better songs," he said. "I can relate to them on a deeper level. The reasons why I wrote them were very personal."  
When I was writing them for Phineas Gage, I was writing them for the lead vocalist to sing. I think they were a bit more general."  
Then there's the matter of the name Mooshka, which Lumelsky has decided to perform under. Of course, there is another story.

A friend lent him a T-shirt with the word Mooshka on it, which became Lumelsky's nickname. He told he never did return the shirt.  
Mooshka will open for the Junk Monkeys Saturday, May 30, at Lil's, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. For information, call 875-6355.

# 'Daughters' sacrifices plot for emotion



**JOHN MONAGHAN**  
practicing ritual magic and carrying what she calls "scraps of memories" in an old tin can.

Bulah (Alva Rogers) shares her great-grandmother's concern for preserving the family at all costs. Her pregnancy, however, causes some rift at home, because there is some doubt as to whether the child was conceived by her husband or a white rapist.

Yellow Mary (Barbara O), meanwhile, returns to the community after a prosperous life as a prostitute. Though scorned by many of her relatives, she returns to the island to participate in the family's elaborate farewell celebration.

Emotion and beauty resound throughout the film. You can sense insecurity of leaving the island. They have an almost idyllic existence here, with the freedom, community, and standard of living in complete contrast to the family's years of slavery just a few decades before.

## SCREEN SCENE

**DETROIT FILM THEATRE**, Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward, Detroit. Call 832-2730 for information. (55)

**MAGIC BAG THEATRE CAFE**, 2201 Woodward, Ferndale. Call 544-3030 for information. (54)

**MICHIGAN THEATRE**, 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Call 668-8397 for information. (55; \$1 student/senior)

**STATE WAYNE THEATRE**, 36310 Michigan Ave., Wayne. Call 326-4690 for information. (52; \$1 student/senior).

"Daughters of the Dust" (USA - 1992) - 7, 9:30 p.m., May 22-23; 4, 7 p.m., May 24. A family of African-Americans on a southern island in 1902 contemplates moving to the mainland. Though not graced with a particular plot, this lyrical feature by first-time director Julie Dash contains some beautiful images and moments.

"Frida Kahlo: A Ribbon Around a Bomb" (USA - 1991). This portrait of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo weaves together interviews with students and friends, excerpts from the play "The Diary of Frida Kahlo," and most importantly looks at her intensely personal work.

"Mediterranean" (Italy - 1991). Through May 25 (call for show-times). Italian soldiers during World War II find solace on a Greek island in this quirky, often charming film that won the Best Foreign Language Film Oscar this year.

"Philadelphia Story" (USA - 1940). May 20-24 (call for show-times). Philip Barry's stage play is adapted for the screen with a stellar cast. Katharine Hepburn plays a bride-to-be whose wedding is disrupted not only by an amorous newspaper reporter (Jimmy Stewart) but also her ex-husband (Cary Grant). Directed by George Cukor.

**HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY**, 16301 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. Call 943-2037 for information. (Free)

"A Farewell to Arms" (USA - 1932) 7 p.m., May 18. The first film adaptation of Hemingway's novel about an American ambulance driver (Gary Cooper) who falls for a British nurse (Helen Hayes) in Italy during World War I.

"The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-Up Zombies" (USA - 1964) and "The Thrill Killers" (USA - 1965) on May 21. Two psychotronic classics directed by Ray Dennis Steckler, who also stars in the films under the pseudonym Cash Place.

"The Bridge on the River Kwai" (British - 1957). May 20-24 (call for show-times). Alec Guinness leads a group of British soldiers in a Japanese prison camp to construct a bridge for the enemy only to find that subversive William Holden has plans to destroy it. David Lean directed.

— John Monaghan

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