



'Rising Sun': emotion-charged murder mystery

"Rising Sun," a Twentieth Century-Fox presentation opening Friday at suburban movie theaters, is a murder mystery set against the backdrop of U.S.-Japanese business relationships and competition.

Web Smith (Wesley Snipes), a liaison officer with the Los Angeles Police Department, is called to investigate the murder of a young woman in the boardroom of a Japanese corporation in downtown Los Angeles. A mysterious call puts him together with a strange, shadowy figure — Detective John Connor (Sean Connery), who is rumored to be under the influence of the Japanese.

Connor becomes his guide (the script) and leads the younger detective (Kohal) through the investigation through futuristic technological secrets and through ancient ways and loyalties.

And as they close in on the mystery, the mystery closes in on them. Doors slide shut. A secret world opens.

"Rising Sun" is directed by Philip Kaufman and produced by Peter Kaufman with Sean Connery as executive director. The screenplay is written by Philip Kaufman, Michael Crichton and Michael Backes, based on the novel by Crichton, who also wrote the novel "Jurassic Park." "Ris-

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Unfortunately, this philosophy isn't taught at American police academies. Web Smith, whose no-nonsense approach to police work has yielded great success in the past, is resistant to being bogged down by the protocol of a society not his own. But as both men adapt to the working methods of the other, a mutual respect is formed.

The supporting cast of "Rising Sun" is led by Keitel. It is Keitel's character, Lt. Tom Graham, who gives a face to the hostility with which some Americans respond to the growing Japanese presence in their country. It is a film about the character that the phrase "Japan-bashing" packages a lot of emotion and generates an almost immediate gut reaction when it is used or portrayed.

Contrasting Keitel's inflammatory character in "Rising Sun" are a number of actors from the Japanese-American acting community, including Tagawa, Stan Egi and Mako. They work alongside co-stars Anderson, Carrere, Ray Wise and fashion model Tatjana Patitz in her acting debut to supply the film with its array of heroes and villains.

"The real luxury with the Japanese roles in 'Rising Sun' is that they are not simple characters who walk the typical lines," said Tagawa, who plays the key role of Eddie Sakamura. "Eddie is a man who is caught between the Japanese and American cultures, with certain loyalties pulling him in different directions."

"Because there are so few Japanese writers in Hollywood, as well as projects that honestly deal with the Japanese and Japanese-American communities, this type of character hasn't really been seen in the American cinema."

"These are certainly two different cultures, two quite different concepts of how one solves problems," said Connery. "I think there is a great deal to be learned from the Japanese, not just from business practices but from their culture. And the Japanese can learn from America, which is something they seem to do very well."

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ing Sun" also stars Harvey Keitel, Cary-Hirozaki Tagawa, Kevin Anderson, Mako and Tia Carrere.

"The story has all the things that I find interesting in a movie: strong characters, a culture clash and a topic that's significant," said Sean Connery, who also serves as the film's executive producer. "There's a lot of humor in the film which is something I always search for in anything I do. You can reveal more through humor than through the actual telling of the story. No matter how serious the subject, how bad the circumstances, humor always gives a reassuring balance to things."

Many of the lighter elements in "Rising Sun" come as a result of the contrasting viewpoints that John Connor and Web Smith bring to the murder investigation.

For Connor, this new partnership creates a dynamic which he immediately understands. The Japanese call it a *senpai/kohai* union, which clearly defines the roles of the senior and junior partner in any business situation.

"It's just a given that at meetings and at other types of dealings, the top person is never up front," said Connery. "The real No. 1 man is always observing while the junior man does the talking."

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Intrigue: Sean Connery (left) as John Connor and Wesley Snipes as Web Smith investigate the death of a young woman in "Rising Sun."

and neighbors on our movie page. Please limit your mini-reviews to 100 words and send them to the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. Attention: Keely Wygonik, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, Mich. 48160. Or fax your reviews to her at 591-7278. Reviews should include your name, address and a daytime telephone number. If you have any questions, call Keely Wygonik, 953-2105.

'Rookie of the Year': cute idea but a silly fantasy

In "Rookie of the Year," a 12-year-old boy's pitching arm leads the Chicago Cubs to the World Series. The cute idea, a throwback to just about every live-action Disney movie I saw as a kid, comes off as harmless summer fun.

The miracle occurs as Henry Rowengartner (Thomas Ian Nicholas) runs for a fly ball. One of the cool kids has thrown it high and Henry, still stinging from yesterday's horrible performance

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on the baseball field, wants desperately to catch it.

A trip on an errand ball sends Henry flying into the air. He catches it and smashes onto his shoulder. Months in a cast tighten the tendons in his arm to such an extent that they snap with the force of a mousetrap spring when he lobs a baseball.

Soon Henry finds himself under contract to the Cubs, pitching to real-life players like Pedro Guerrero and Barry Bonds. Gary Busey plays Chet "Rocket" Steadman, a once-great but now-tired pitcher who Henry ends up relieving in earlier and earlier innings.

As the kid, Nicholas is cute enough and nerdy enough for the role. He spends most of the film with his mouth gaping open, even after several games, and the gee-whiz quality wears a bit thin after a while.

The always-watchable Busey sports a mustache and thick blond hair tucked up under his Cubs hat. He looks like a major-league player and acts like one too, though the usual pitchers' cocktail of chew has mysteriously disappeared.

The real rookie in this picture is Daniel Stern, stepping up to the plate for his first time as director. Penny Marshall and Henry Winkler have gone behind the camera, so why not this gangly character actor, best known for playing one of the bad guys in the "Home Alone" movies?

While he succeeds in bringing wholesomeness back to the movies, Stern gives himself an irritating part as a super-dweeby pitch-

ing coach who walks into walls and kicks himself in the chest. The rest of us aren't quite prepared for such a literal tribute to Jerry Lewis.

Stern and screenwriter Sam Harper may have underestimated their audience. Most kids, especially teenagers, are too sophisticated to fall for anything this dopey. They like a realistic framework even during an obvious fantasy.

I know it's a movie, but Henry always tries out new stuff (like pitching and batting) in front of a sellout crowd at Wrigley Field. Don't these guys ever watch anything out in practice? And why do the Cubs have only two pitchers in the bullpen?

There's a message in here somewhere as Henry realizes that a career in baseball is only a fleeting dream-come-true. Friends and family are what really matter in the long run.

Parents will love "Rookie of the Year" so will some small children. But most of the teenagers I know will be snoozing after 20 minutes or sneaking into the neighboring theater for a second run through "Jurassic Park."

"Rookie of the Year" is now

playing at these suburban movie theaters: AMC Americana West, AMC Laurel Park, Showcase Westland, AMC Southfield City, Star Winchester, United Artists

12 Oaks, AMC Wonderland, United Artists West River.

To leave a message for John Managhan, dial 953-2047, mailbox number 1866, on a Touch-

Tone phone, fax him a note at 691-7278, or write him in care of Entertainment, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48160.



MICHAEL P. WEINSTEIN

Dream come true: Thomas Ian Nicholas (center) stars as 12-year-old Henry Rowengartner, a pitcher for the Chicago Cubs, in "Rookie of the Year."

FILM CLIPS

"ROOKIE OF THE YEAR"

Released by: Twentieth Century Fox

Starring: Thomas Ian Nicholas, Gary Busey, Amy Morton, Bruce Altman, Eddie Bracken

Directed by: Daniel Stern

Produced by: Robert Harper

Screenplay by: Sam Harper

Rated: PG (Parental Guidance Suggested)

Running time: One hour, 46 minutes

Rating (out of a possible four):

☺ ☺ ☺ ☺

'The Fugitive' opens Aug. 6

Action, drama, romance — there's something for everyone this summer at the movies. Here's a peek at some of what's on tap:

■ Opening Friday, Aug. 6 — "The Fugitive." A contemporary action thriller about one man's desperate flight as he attempts to track down his wife's murderer and prove his own innocence. Stars Harrison Ford and Tommy Lee Jones. Inspired by the hugely successful TV series of the 1960s.

■ Opening Friday, Aug. 13 — "Into the West." Two young children steal a horse and set off on their own through Ireland. Pursued by police, their father, his girlfriend and the horse's owner, they soon capture the hearts of the entire country with their flight. Stars Gabriel Byrne, Ellen Barkin, David Kelly, Clarin Fitzgerald and Rory Conway.

■ Opening Friday, Aug. 13 — "Useful Things." A peaceful village in England unravels under a rash of violence when a seemingly benign stranger opens an antique shop, the contents of which have the power to unleash the evil that lies beneath the peaceful veneer. Stars Ed Harris, Bonnie Bedelia, Max Von Sydow, Amanda Plummer and J.T. Walsh.

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