

In Review: Lost Chances

broker who finds his only solace in the Vermeers that hang in the Met and in Frick. His job is a grueling, tense grind of flickering lights and focused co-workers. But then, a woman appears, who not only appears to drink Vermeers with the same thirst that Lack has but also resembles a girl in one of the portraits he adores.

Lack is electrified but hesitant to make a move on a total stranger. Still the possibility for transcendence is too great. Casting caution to the winds he makes a move. The girl is coy. After a while they date. Lack opens his heart. He tells her he's fond of her. She responds by asking for money. The dance goes on until disaster strikes but somehow there is sweetness in this fine choreography of life. This is a movie not to be missed.



Malcolm X

Everyone knows Malcolm intimately (at least that's the claim) so any take on this brilliant, complex man's life is bound to run up against a nation, if not a world, of critics. Lee, however, has yet managed to pull off an entertaining film.

Denzel Washington's performance as Malcolm is nothing short of spellbinding and when you add superb support from Al Freeman Jr.'s Elijah Muhammad, Delroy Lindo's West Indian Archie, and Albert Hall's Brother Baines, you get a film that consistently delights.

But therein lies the Rub: To say a film about the life of Malcolm X entertains" and "delights" is to approach the work with some caution. Indeed such words, hanging as the chief positive responses to the film

simply do not sit right.

The problem is that Malcolm's life was intense and raging with passion. His great autobiography was a confessional along the lines of Augustine's; his audience was God and the saints, his goal vindication and proper legacy.

Lee, on the other hand, has made a patient, reverent retelling of events. He is careful to the extreme and because such a blow by blow approach that certain events must be condensed or discarded altogether, the film was bound to delight the widest part of the audience without fulfilling it. Meanwhile the true believers stew and fret, blurting out "I told you so" at every opportunity.

The result is a movie that is entertaining because Malcolm's life was so rich with wonderful experiences. But Lee's Malcolm X also leaves one a bit empty; Malcolm is a man who needs to be engaged, challenged and opened up. We all remember his own coda: "Only the mistakes have been mine."

These words imply a challenge: here is a life waiting for the searing light not the gentle glow of the searcher's lamp.

Laws of Gravity

Nick Gomez's study of lower class confusion and idleness is not quite the "anarchy X" generation anthem of couch potatoes and rock induced ennui that now defines our age, but it comes close. Guys sit around figuring out scams, drink at the local bar and talk of scoring a big payday when the audience can clearly see that no payday is in sight.

Here is life under a big, crushing boulder. It is "Mean Streets," without the sordid hopes and petty dreams. This is ground zero.

Gomez's direction is energetic, the acting first rate and the script is no-nonsense. In short, "Laws of Gravity" is an underappreciated gem.

Reservoir Dogs

Just a word: I don't know what it is about. It certainly is wanton enough. Guys gather round to rob a bank. Things go desperately wrong. There's blood everywhere and there might be an undercover cop among the group.

Quentin Tarentino's film isn't a thriller, nor is it a deep, probing drama. The characters are unlikable and their plight leaves you cold. But this film is an exercise in style and the action sequences are brutal and sharp with a rag-tag sense of scary truth about them. A point of view would be nice, but "Reservoir Dogs" reveals the touch of a promising talent.