

delightful 'Diva' shimmers, shines

By **Debbi Roberts**
Of the Emerald

"Diva" shimmers and shines in iridescent waves of light and sound.

Billed as a French New Wave thriller, "Diva" transcends this fall's offering of American cinema with delight. The camera caresses. The music is reminiscent of windchimes. "Diva" is simply beautiful.

Director and writer Jean-Jacque Beineix treats his film with love. In the opening sequences, the camera encircles Diva — the film's namesake — with elegance.

Diva is Cynthia Hawkins (Wilhemina Wiggins Fernandez), an American opera star performing in Paris. As she sings, the camera circles from afar and lets the audience know she is the best. Diva is called a prima donna because she won't allow her voice to be recorded. An artist who believes in the beauty of the moment, Diva doesn't want herself or her voice to be exploited.

"Music comes and goes," she says.

"Don't try to keep it."

In love with Diva is Jules (Federic Adrei), a young Parisian who follows her tour with deified obsession. One night, Jules records Diva in concert and two record pirates catch him in the act. They ransack his home in hopes of finding the illegal tape. But alas, Jules has disappeared with bigger troubles. Two other men, a Spanish gangster and a punked-out killer, are also chasing after Jules, believing he has a tape that will incriminate them in an international drug and white slavery ring.

Confused? The plot in "Diva" is a bit complex, but the characters are so alive and the blue-tinted images are so vivid and yet dream-like it makes up for the fast-paced plot. The chase scene in the Paris metro is one of the best chase scenes on film.

"Diva" is a surprise from the start. The film thrills, charms and inspires a definite love of opera, relationships and beautiful French films.



Federic Adrei and Thuy An Luu star in 'Diva', now playing at the Bijou.

Family crumbles at Smash Palace

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"Smash Palace" is an auto wrecking yard in New Zealand filled with rusty skeletons from past fatalities. It is also the battleground for a middle-class family that is falling apart.

Al Shaw (Bruno Lawrence), a volatile non-communicative man, inherited Smash Palace from his father and refuses to sell the dump that gives him all the spare parts he needs for his one obsession — his race car.

Wife Jackie (Anna Jamieson) hates her lack of social life and the wrecks in her front and back yards. But mostly she's tired of Al who never listens and never talks except to shout at her.

Between the battling parents is Georgie (Greer Robson), their usually animated 7-year-old who sits in a bedroom corner flashing a flashlight on her face during their fights.

Director, writer and producer

Roger Donaldson paints lack of communication as the grounds for the family break-up in this New Zealand film.

The film takes hold as the estranged husband becomes stranger in his isolation. Unable to tell anyone of his desperation, the need to see his daughter forces him into the role of a kidnapper. Smash Palace then becomes another battleground for a man who is losing his grip on reality — a man who has gone too far to make a stand and can't turn back.

"Smash Palace" doesn't really begin until half way through the picture. Though the ending is powerful, the slow building of characters may disappoint viewers. Still, anyone who has ever faced family discord will appreciate "Smash Palace" as a film that shows how non-communication can disrupt and change people's lives.



Metheny plays Hult Center

The EMU Cultural Forum has announced that jazz fusion guitarist Pat Metheny will bring his band to the Hult Center for the Performing Arts

on Oct. 20. Metheny's sold-out show last year in the EMU Ballroom was one of the most successful concerts the Forum has ever had.

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