



Nathalie Press (left) spends *My Summer of Love* with Emily Blunt.

trying on each other's clothes and passing out. The pansexual Tamsin is manipulative and beguiling, and Mona, who recently suffered a humiliating breakup with a married man, is quietly desperate for the attention Tamsin lavishes on her.

The acting and the camera work in *My Summer of Love* (which received awards from the 2004 Edinburgh International Film Festival, the London Film Critic's Circle and the British Academy of Film and Television Arts) are what give it an intensely alluring quality.

Ultimately, though, the love affair between these two characters, while believable, is a shiny, Hollywood, straight man's fantasy of what two young women in love looks like, namely: perky, nubile breasts being nuzzled by wine-stained, bee-stung lips while their owners roll around in various states of undress looking seductive and irresistible.

The ending provides the audience with an artificially tacked-on twist (à la *Swimming Pool*), which you will either love or hate. Regardless, the whole of this film (opening June 17 at Fox Tower Cinemas) is greater than the sum of its parts and is certainly worth checking out with a lover on a languid summer day in between two glasses of wine.

—JB Rabin

Saving Face

With *Saving Face* (opening June 24 at Fox Tower Cinemas), first-time writer/director Alice Wu has made a Chinese-American lesbian sitcom, but it's a *good* Chinese-American lesbian sitcom. Her light but deft touch brings everything off without ever veering into the preachy or maudlin, and the film offers enough unforced charm, laughter and warmth to prevent the romantic comedy soufflé from falling.

Wil (Michelle Krusiec), an ambitious young New York City neurosurgeon, meets Vivian (Lynn Chen), a ballet dancer and, coincidentally, the daughter of Wil's boss, at a Chinese-American social gathering in Flushing, Queens, where they were both raised. Romantic sparks fly, and they begin a flirtation that

quickly leads to uninhibited passion.

But if Wil's widowed mother can at age 48 incur the unequivocal wrath of her own parents—Wil's grandparents, survivors of China's cultural revolution—when she announces that she has become pregnant and will not name the father, how could Wil be open about the even less conventional romantic and sexual dimension of her own life? Wil is forced to answer that question when her mother, disowned by her parents, moves in with her, and maternal intrusiveness compounds the compli-



Lynn Chen (left) and Michelle Krusiec star in *Saving Face*, summer 2005's must-see dyke date movie.

cations of juggling her demanding career and closeted love affair with the out and increasingly impatient Vivian.

Wu wryly, gently acknowledges the occasionally suffocating complexities and conflicts of ethnic and sexual identity, and she sets Wil and Vivian's romance against a beautiful Manhattan backdrop, calling to mind *When Harry Met Sally...* and the lighter side of Woody Allen. As a downside, this can have the effect of denying full gravity to the film's serious moments, but Wu's instinct is more for easy-going, humanistic, humorous storytelling than any rigorous sort of depth, and scenes such as Wil's quietly momentous coming out are written and performed with enough insight that they can peacefully coexist with the film's farcical climactic wedding scene without either piece feeling out of place.

Despite its nontraditional characters and situations, *Saving Face* is for the most part a rather even, neat and tidy film. It more or less dutifully follows the expected formulas, but it follows them proficiently enough, and in enough of the right spirit, to earn its place as an actually enjoyable (read: not dumbed down) crowd-pleaser and summer 2005's must-see dyke date movie (along with the more desperately romantic girls-in-love thriller *My Summer of Love*).

—Christopher McQuain

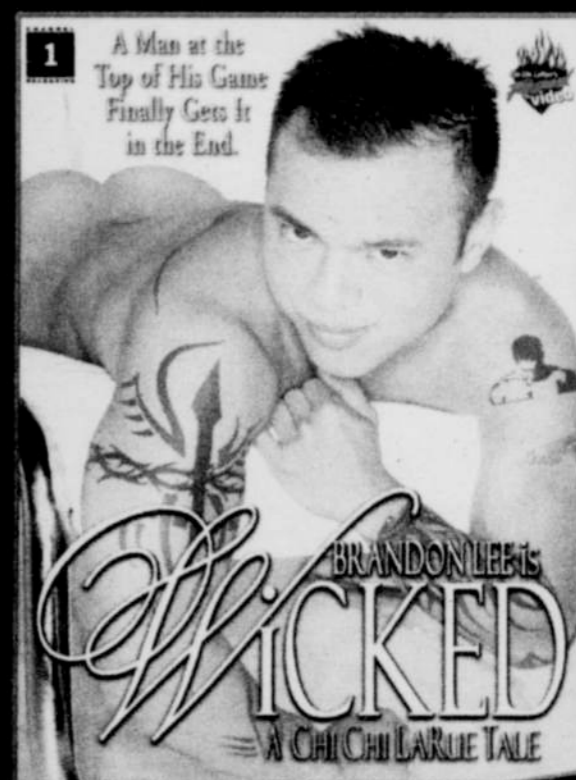
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