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movies BY LOIS WADSWORTH



**FRANCES (DIANE LANE)
REFLECTS THE THERAPEUTIC
EFFECTS OF LIFE IN TUSCANY.**

FRANCO BIOCCHI, BUENA VISTA, 2003.

Escape to Italy

The little pleasures in life

UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN: Written and directed by Audrey Wells, based on the memoir by Frances Mayes. Produced by Tom Sternberg and Audrey Wells. Executive producers Laura Fattori, Sandy Kroopf, Mark Gill. Cinematography, Geoffrey Simpson. Production design, Stephen McCabe. Editors, Andrew Marcus, Arthur Coburn./ Costumes, Nicoletta Ercole. Music, Christophe Beck. Starring Diane Lane, with Sandra Oh, Lindsay Duncan, Raoul Bova, Vincent Riotta, Pawel Szajda, Giullia Steigerwalt. Touchstone Pictures, 2003. PG-13. 115 minutes.

hearty, healing laughter.

Frances does not lack resources. She buys an Italian villa and pays laborers to renovate it; that takes big bucks. She's a writer, but we don't see her writing. We don't know where she gets her money. Maybe Frances's financial status is handled more clearly in the book, but it's probably best if you don't imagine taking off for Tuscany on your own with just your Visa card and having such a fine time. The challenge of finding a way to reclaim your life after a major cataclysm is more daunting for women with fewer resources than it is for Frances.

Sandra Oh plays Patti, Frances's good friend from San Francisco. Patti gives Frances the ticket to Tuscany to begin with, and Frances makes pregnant Patti welcome when she comes to the villa. I've only seen Oh previously in 1999's *Last Night*, an end-of-the-world film by Don McKellar, in which she was terrific. Like Lane, Oh works from an inner fire that comes out through her characters. She's very good.

Martini (Vincent Riotta) is the realtor who handles the sale of the house for Frances. One of the best scenes in the film is when he politely but with emotion tells Frances how he feels about her. Sweet.

In Tuscan Sun,
no one will be
murdered, stalked,
chased or tortured.
No adrenaline rush.

I loved seeing this film with an audience overwhelmingly comprised of women who liked it a lot. Women need a vacation from real life as much as men, who seek adventure action films for their non-reality fling. Films made for young men bore me to death. There's rarely a character I care about, the action is mindless, and sometimes the whole movie is driven by special effects. In *Tuscan Sun*, no one will be murdered, stalked, chased or tortured. No adrenaline rush.

It's a fantasy, but who among us has not imagined a vacation to Italy, with its delicious comfort food, incredible wines, lovely people, exquisite buildings and landscapes? The film does not disappoint. Italians know how to enjoy life, an art rapidly being lost in our society. We're always in a hurry to get to the next place, finish the next task, catch the next show, make the next dollar. We don't stop often enough to appreciate a leisurely meal with friends, real conversation and

This is Wells' second feature film. Although she wrote the original screen play for *Guinivere* (1999), starring Stephen Rea and Sarah Polley, which she also directed, we in Eugene are seeing her work theatrically for the first time. *Under the Tuscan Sun* will not appear on my top ten list for 2003, but it is an enjoyable film. If you need a little break from life's pace, relax and spend a couple of hours in Italy with Diane Lane. Recommended, it's now playing at Cinemark.

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Portland	Schnitzer Concert Hall	Oct. 24 th	6:30 & 9:30 pm
Portland	Schnitzer Concert Hall	Oct. 25 th	3:00, 6:00 & 9:00 pm
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