



BOB HARRIS (BILL MURRAY) AND CHARLOTTE (SCARLETT JOHANSSON) AT A CLUB.

Tokyo by Night Friends

LOST IN TRANSLATION: Written and directed by Sofia Coppola. Produced by Sofia Coppola. Ross Katz. Executive producers, Francis Ford Coppola, Fred Roos. Cinematography, Lance Acord. Edited by Sarah Flack. Original music, Kevin Shields. Music producer, Brian Reitzell. Costumes, Nancy Steiner. Sound designer, Richard Beggs. Production design, Anne Ross, K.K. Barrett. Starring Bill Murray and Scarlett Johansson, with Giovanni Ribisi, Anna Faris, Catherine Lambert. Focus Features, 2003. R. 102 minutes.

Sofia Coppola's second feature film (*The Virgin Suicides*) is a minimalist joy. When she was getting others interested in the work, she showed them a story she'd written, not a screenplay. Even in the finished piece, there's really no plot. But the story is about two lonely, American strangers temporarily stranded in a high-rise Tokyo hotel (the Park Hyatt), who become friends.

Bill Murray plays Bob Harris, a film star revered by the Japanese for comedic roles from earlier in his faltering career. Scarlett Johansson plays Charlotte, a philosophy graduate now married to a photographer who's off shooting music videos. Both give performances that are true and heartbreaking.

While the film has little dialogue, the subtle sounds of hotel life as well as the more complicated rhythms and melodies of Tokyo street life animate the non-talking scenes. Everything that's going to happen between Bob and Charlotte takes place in a compressed time-frame, but the pace of the picture only feels hurried in its final minutes. Longing is one of the more difficult screen passions to portray, but Murray and Johansson reveal new ways to express its complexity.

An inability to sleep first connects them. The film opens with a scene of Charlotte seen from the back, in discreet see-through pink underwear and a camisole, lying on a tousled bed. Charlotte observes her husband, John (Giovanni Ribisi), hastily packing his camera bag, off for the day's shoot. He's gone in a flash, and the young woman has a whole day and night to fill on her own.

Bob is sleepy when he first arrives at the airport, greeted by a number of people from the company that's brought him to Japan, Suntory. But by the time he actually gets to his hotel room and his bed, Bob is wide awake, staring starkly at the walls. He heads for the hotel bar for a nightcap.

These patterns are established over a few days, with only slight variations. But the scenes of Bob shooting the Suntory whiskey advertisement stand alone. Bob sits in a sleep-deprived stupor while a Japanese director half his age hurls loud, staccato instructions at him. "More intensity" is desired. Bob struggles to deliver an invitation to relax with a whiskey the way the director wants. It takes an old pro like Murray to pull off a scene like this, and he's terrific.

Meanwhile, Charlotte fills her days with sightseeing, shopping or learning the art of *ikebana* (flower arrangement) in the hotel, but she still sits alone in her room much of the time, wistfully missing her husband and confused about why she came on the trip at all.

Between them, Bob and Charlotte show dislocation and loneliness to be demanding states of melancholy. Then they begin to catch sight of one another in the elevator, or in the bar in the middle of the night. Soon enough they are compatriots on the town, looking for some action through the long nights and days. They hail taxis and run down the street, hand-in-hand. The intimacy between them grows.

This is a movie for grown-ups who can sit through a character-driven, moody film. It is a film to be seen more than once, to be savored and thought about. Coppola shows a sure hand in achieving a subtle picture of strangers who discover the quiet pleasures of friendship. Murray brings exhaustion to a lyrical pinnacle.

The film receives my very highest recommendations. Now playing at Cinema World and Cinemark. **EW**

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INTOLERABLE CRUELTY* PG-13 12:55, 3:45, 7:20, 10:00	UNDERWORLD R 12:05, 3:05, 7:00, 10:00
HOUSE OF THE DEAD* R 12:20, 2:55, 5:25, 8:00, 10:30	MATCHSTICK MEN PG-13 12:40, 6:50
SCHOOL OF ROCK* PG-13 1:00, 1:45, 3:50, 4:30, 7:15, 7:45, 9:50, 10:30	PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN PG-13 12:10, 3:35, 6:55, 10:15
OUT OF TIME* PG-13 1:15, 1:55, 4:00, 4:35, 7:05, 7:40, 9:45	
LOST IN TRANSLATION* R 1:40, 4:20, 7:30, 10:25	
THE RUNDOWN PG-13 1:25, 4:05, 4:35, 7:10, 9:50, 10:20	
UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN PG-13 1:05, 4:10, 7:05, 10:10	

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***UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN - PG-13** (1:00) 3:40 6:20 9:00
OUT OF TIME - PG-13 (1:20) 4:10 6:40 9:10
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