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Jaw Bait

Captives

Directed by Angela Pope
Written by Frank Deasy
A Miramax release

Last Dance

Directed by Bruce Beresford
Written by Ron Koslow
A Touchstone Pictures release

BY AMY TAUBIN

If Tim Roth or Julia Ormond figure in your fantasy life, then *Captives*, a film that includes several scenes of the two of them getting it on in a toilet stall, won't be a complete waste of time.

Ormond plays an upper-middle-class dentist who works part-time in a men's prison. (Julia looks terrific and ever so untouchable in ankle-length skirts wittily accessorized with a portable aluminum dental case.) Roth plays a convict nearing the end of a 10-year sentence. (I was too fixated on his tattoos to notice exactly what it is he wears.)

Julia and Tim are attracted at first sight, but things really begin to heat up when she gets him in the chair. *Captives* is probably the first movie to turn dentistry into extended erotic foreplay. Soon Tim's sticking his fingers into Julia's mouth as often as she's sticking hers into his (and he doesn't have a professional excuse). Julia is particularly vulnerable to Tim's attentions because she recently left her husband (also a dentist) after discovering he was involved with another woman.

Tim is allowed to leave the prison one day a week to study computer programming. Julia gets into the habit of meeting him in the pub where he waits for the bus that takes him back. After they get all hot and bothered feeling each other up under the table, they retire to the ladies loo. ("I can't believe I'm fucking a convict in a public bathroom," says Julia out loud to no one in particular. If it weren't Tim Roth, it *really* would be unbelievable.) Since Julia and Tim are far from discreet, it's not long before some of Tim's fellow inmates notice that they're messing around, and before one can say we need some sort of plot twist to get us through the last half hour, Julia is blackmailed by a crazy crack dealer into carrying contraband material past the guards.



Now open wide: Ormond and Roth in *Captives*

Angela Pope, who's directed a number of very good British films in the television social-drama mode (most recently *Hollow Reed*, which has a couple of sex scenes between Ian Hart and Martin Donovan that are every bit as tricky as the ones in *Captives*), is very good with the actors. It's neither her fault nor theirs that the film doesn't add up. Without the hokey prison hook, *Captives* could have focused more attention on how much of *l'amour fou* is true and how much is merely slumming. As it is, the message seems to be: Affirmative action breeds strange bedfellows.

Though negative comparisons to *Dead Man Walking* are inevitable, *Last Dance*, Disney's Sharon Stone vehicle, is a bland retread of Robert Wise's *I Want To Live!*, the 1958 anti-capital punishment film that won an Oscar for Susan Hayward and shocked audiences by setting its closing scenes inside the gas chamber.

Last Dance takes us inside the lethal-injection chamber, where we get to see Stone spread and bound on the table, not just once but twice. Do I feel remorse about giving this away? Not a bit. Some sadistic fuckers—and a lot more unconscious sadists—will go to the movie just for that spectacle, and

my one-line description won't blunt the thrill.

Stone plays a 12-year inmate of death row whose time has run out. Rob Morrow plays the young playboy lawyer who, while handling her clemency appeal, discovers that, although she committed a double murder, she didn't deserve the death penalty. Their performances are as predictable as the script, the direction, the lighting, whatever.

Ostensibly a progressive and even feminist film, *Last Dance* plays into the forces of reaction by making the triumph of the rich and powerful seem inevitable. Stone's execution does not leave Morrow determined to

continue the good fight. Instead, he goes on a pilgrimage to the Taj Mahal in her honor. I guess the powers that be at Disney must have figured that if they couldn't give viewers an upbeat ending, they could at least leave 'em *laughing*.