

## Document Citation

Title	<b>Reel to reel : The road home</b>
Author(s)	Alvin Lu
Source	<i>San Francisco Bay Guardian</i>
Date	2001 Apr 25
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	44
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Wo de fu qin mu qin (The road home), Zhang, Yimou, 1999

# Reel to reel

## Notes on the San Francisco International Film Festival, week two.

### Fri/27

**Not Forgotten** (Makoto Shinozaki, Japan) Watch any isolated 10-minute stretch from former film critic Makoto Shinozaki's new feature, and you'd never imagine what could possibly be going on elsewhere in this lovely and horrifying film. By rapid mood swings a tender, comic-elegiac portrait of the elderly, a ferocious condemnation of cult (and by implication, emperor) worship, and a flame-throwing flashback to the atrocities of the Second World War, *Not Forgotten* is yet another standout example of Japanese cinema's current renaissance of nongeneric genre flicks. A kind of anti-*Afterlife*, Shinozaki's film is less interested in memorializing the afterglow of the recently de-



**Not Forgotten**

ceased than celebrating just how far the soon-to-be-gone are sometimes willing to go. Filled with vintage character actors and half-remembered faces from Japanese cinema's past — here the child star of Ozu's *I Was Born, But ...*, there a wizened cop from Kurosawa's *High and Low* — *Not Forgotten* is a film of fabulous tenderness and shockingly seething resentment: the Japanese sleeper of the year. 12:45 p.m., Kabuki; also Sat/28, 6:30 p.m. and Sun/29, 1 p.m., Kabuki. (Chuck Stephens)

**The Road Home** (Zhang Yimou, China) Without Gong Li, Zhang Yimou seems to be remaking his early films — or “undoing” them: at least *Not One Less* tackles arguably his best film, *The Story of Qiu Ju*. This one is really one and a half films packaged together. The middle film, starring *Crouching Tiger*'s Zhang Ziyi, is a vacuous pastiche of the somewhat more substantial peasant-and-landscape melodramas that established the director's career — which doesn't mean it isn't eminently watchable and a beautiful diversion, as the film basically amounts to breathtaking landscape photography intercut with close-ups of Ziyi's face. Effective in *Crouching Tiger* as a brat, here



**The Road Home**

she's no Gong Li. The framing narrative is of a completely different character. Shot in “indie” black-and-white, it feels like a Jim Jarmusch adaptation of *As I Lay Dying*, but it doesn't really go anywhere. 7 p.m., Kabuki; also Sun/29, 6:30 p.m., Park. (Alvin Lu)

**Southern Comfort** (Kate Davis, U.S.) This feature won the documentary Grand Jury prize at the most recent Sundance Festival, a triumph of sentiment over reason. *Southern Comfort* is a portrait of Robert Eads, an FTM who bravely lived in the heart of Bubbaland: rural Georgia, where he was once asked to join a KKK-like group. Director Kate Davis's straightforward narrative approach divides the last year of Eads's life (in a cruel



**Southern Comfort**

irony, he died of cervical cancer) into four seasons. Eads's wry personality and the character of his chosen family — shy transgendered lover Lola Cola, and two fellow FTMs — emerge, complete with occasional spells of pettiness. Smoking like chimneys (my favorite shot: Eads up to his neck in a hot tub, a cigarette drooping from his mouth), they're a smart, mostly lovable bunch, but Davis allows them to play to the camera too often. 4 p.m., Kabuki; also Sat/28, 9:20 p.m., Kabuki. (Johnny Ray Huston)

### Sat/28

**Brother** (Takeshi Kitano, Japan-England) Takeshi Kitano's first international co-production, the ultraviolent *Brother* is the closest the director's come to making a traditional *yakuza* film — chopped fin-



**Brother**

gers and sliced-out guts abound — even though he claims to hate the genre's penchant for puffed-up heroisms. Perhaps that's why Kitano named his own character after the famous WWII admiral Yamamoto and imbued the film with relentless kamikaze nihilism. Heading to

Los Angeles in search of his younger brother (who's played by Claude Maki, the deaf-mute surfer from *A Scene at the Sea*), Yamamoto joins forces with Oma Epps's preternaturally lucky street hust and dive-bombs the Wild West (Coast). Kitano says he made the film for all the journalists who pepper him with questions about the ethics and wide-screen epics of *yakuza* life. “It's my Pearl Harbor,” he said recently. “I'm attacking American culture head-on — and just like the Japanese in WWII, I'm failing miserably!” Burn, Beat, burn. 10 p.m., Kabuki. Also Wed/2, 3:45 p.m., Kabuki. (Stephens)

**The Endurance: Shackleton's Legendary Antarctic Expedition** (Georg Butler, U.S.) This engrossing documentary chronicles Ernest Shackleton's 1914 bid to lead the first team across the Antarctic continent. If he succeeded, the mission would grab glory both for Britain and for Shackleton himself, a determined adventurer who'd been thwarted twice in his crusade to capture the

*Continued on page*



**The Endurance: Shackleton's Legendary Antarctic Expedition**