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House of Flying Daggers

The Times Gala



Zhang Yimou's tale of tangled and tragic love combines the classic elements of the martial arts genre with a dazzling aesthetic and an evocative romantic heart. In the year 859, with the once powerful Tang Dynasty waning and torn by unrest, the most prominent of the rebel armies is the House of Flying Daggers. Two local police captains have been detailed to find and capture the new leader of the group, and their search begins at the Peony Pavilion, a house of pleasure. In the first of series of spectacular set pieces, a beautiful blind dancer, Mei is arrested, suspected of being the daughter of the Flying Daggers leader. One of the captains, Jin, masquerades as a lone warrior and 'rescues' Mei from prison, believing that she will lead him to the secret headquarters of the rebels. The plan works, but in a story where no-one is quite who they seem, passion and complications ensue. More fully realised than *Hero*, *Flying Daggers* is a thrilling action piece, with beautifully choreographed fight sequences, and perfect orchestration of colour, music, dance and design. Lovers of the genre will find much to enjoy, from the treetop battle in the bamboo forest to the rivals' snow-bound final showdown. More than this, the film's attention to characters and the relationships between them ensures that non-aficionados will find themselves drawn into a passionate emotional journey.

Sandra Hebron