

Blu-Ray Review: Zhang Yimou's Odd 'A Woman, a Gun and a Noodle Shop'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 15, 2011 - 11:56am

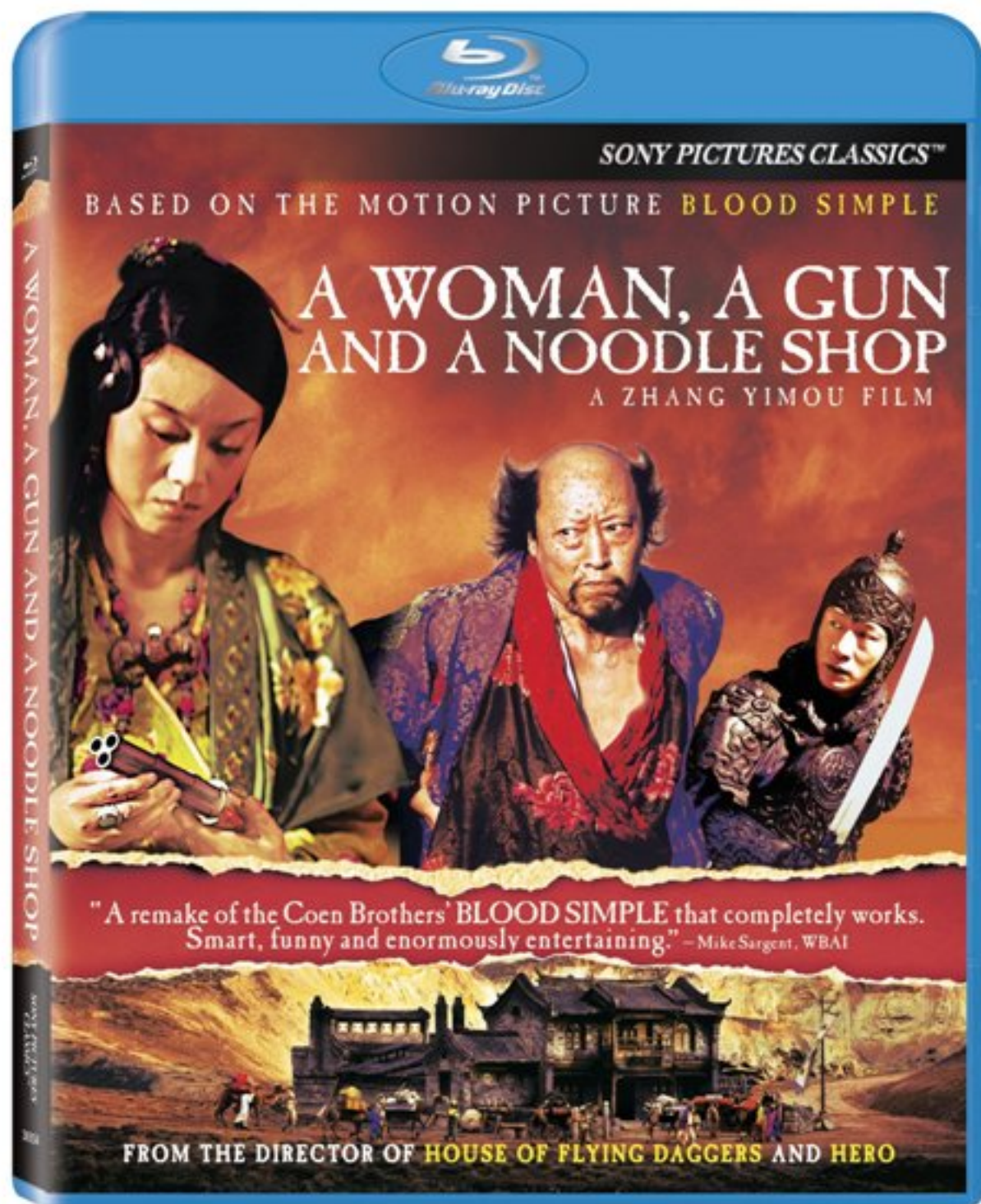
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CHICAGO – I could never quite get my finger on why the super-talented Zhang Yimou (“Hero,” “House of the Flying Daggers”) chose to make “A Woman, a Gun and a Noodle Shop,” a loose remake of the film that introduced Joel and Ethan Coen to the world, “Blood Simple.” It is a case of a talented Chinese director attempting to make a very American genre: noir. To what end? Would it be interesting to watch the Coens remake “Hero”? Sure, but mostly as curiosity and I expect more than curiosities from someone as notable as Yimou.



Blu-Ray Rating: **3.0/5.0**

The action of “Blood Simple” has been transported from Texas to the Gansu province in China. The film opens in a very slapstick comedy vein (trying, I believe, to replicate the dark humor of the Coens, the one element that nearly every one of their imitators bungles) before veering into dark noir territory. The film that unfolds is actually pretty close to the original in that an older gentleman with a younger wife wants her and her lover dead. His attempts to hire a police officer to kill them leads to serious complications.



A Woman, a Gun and a Noodle Shop was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on February 1st, 2011

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Classics

The even shorter version of this short review is that subpar Zhang Yimou is still worth watching but this is undeniably subpar for this talented director. He still knows how to frame a scene, whether it's the desolate landscape that surrounds the titular noodle shop of this film or the intimate interiors of said location, as well as anyone. The design elements of "A Woman, a Gun and a Noodle Shop" are remarkable. But there's something missing on the character side of the equation as Yimou never quite gets the pulse of the piece in the way necessary to remake a modern genre classic.

Don't get me wrong. Fans of Yimou's "costume pieces" like "Hero" or "Curse of the Golden Flower" should realize that he has an extensive filmography of pieces that are more character-driven like "Raise the Red Lantern" and "To Live." It's not that he can't handle characters in the same way that he handles costumes and wire work. He definitely can. He just doesn't quite do so here.

The story of "Blood Simple" requires that the audience see the characters as more than mere devices. Noir is built around engaging character archetypes like the femme fatale, and the people in "A Woman, a Gun and a Noodle Shop" never register. It's a pretty film to watch, especially in HD, but never a particularly engaging one beyond the visuals. I adore Zhang Yimou's visual sense and, if you're in the same camp then you should definitely see it in 1080p, but don't expect this remake to come anywhere near the power of the original.

Special Features:

- o 100 minutes of behind-the-scenes featurettes

"A Woman, a Gun, and a Noodle Shop" was written and directed by Zhang Yimou, based on the film "Blood Simple" by The Coen Brothers. It was released on Blu-ray and DVD on February 1st, 2011 and is rated R.

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