

Entertainment Outlook

'Tequila Sunrise' delivers little kick

By Robert DiMatteo

In Movie Theaters

TEQUILA SUNRISE (R) Here's a movie that harks back to Old Hollywood — to the era when you saw a picture because it had a hot cast. The film features three of the best-looking and most gifted actors (all with gorgeous blue eyes) in movies today: Aussie dreamboat Mel Gibson playing an L.A. drug dealer who is trying to go straight; beefy, likable Kurt Russell as his best friend, who is also a narcotics cop; and Michelle Pfeiffer, that beautiful bag of bones, as the slinky owner of an elegant restaurant.

Written and directed by Robert Towne, who gave us the superb "Shampoo" and "Chinatown," this romantic thriller sets up a new-style

version of the eternal triangle. Will Gibson's last drug deal do him in, and will his buddy Russell nab him? And which guy will win Pfeiffer's affections? Unfortunately, the movie answers these questions in murky, desultory fashion.

Surprisingly, Towne's script sticks to the surface of the characters, bogging down in vague drug deals and nighttime shootouts. The actors are still fine, yet what's surprising is how little energy they and the movie have: Even the erotic encounters aren't what they might be.

Playing a Latin drug kingpin, Raul Julia is the only one who seems fully awake, and his character is a drug-movie cliché. The notion of buddies on opposite sides of the law is all we've got to hold on to — that, and the rather baldly articulated statement that "friendship is the only choice you can make in life." **GRADE: ★★**

(Film grading: ★★★★★ — excellent, ★★★ — good, ★★ — fair, ★ — poor)



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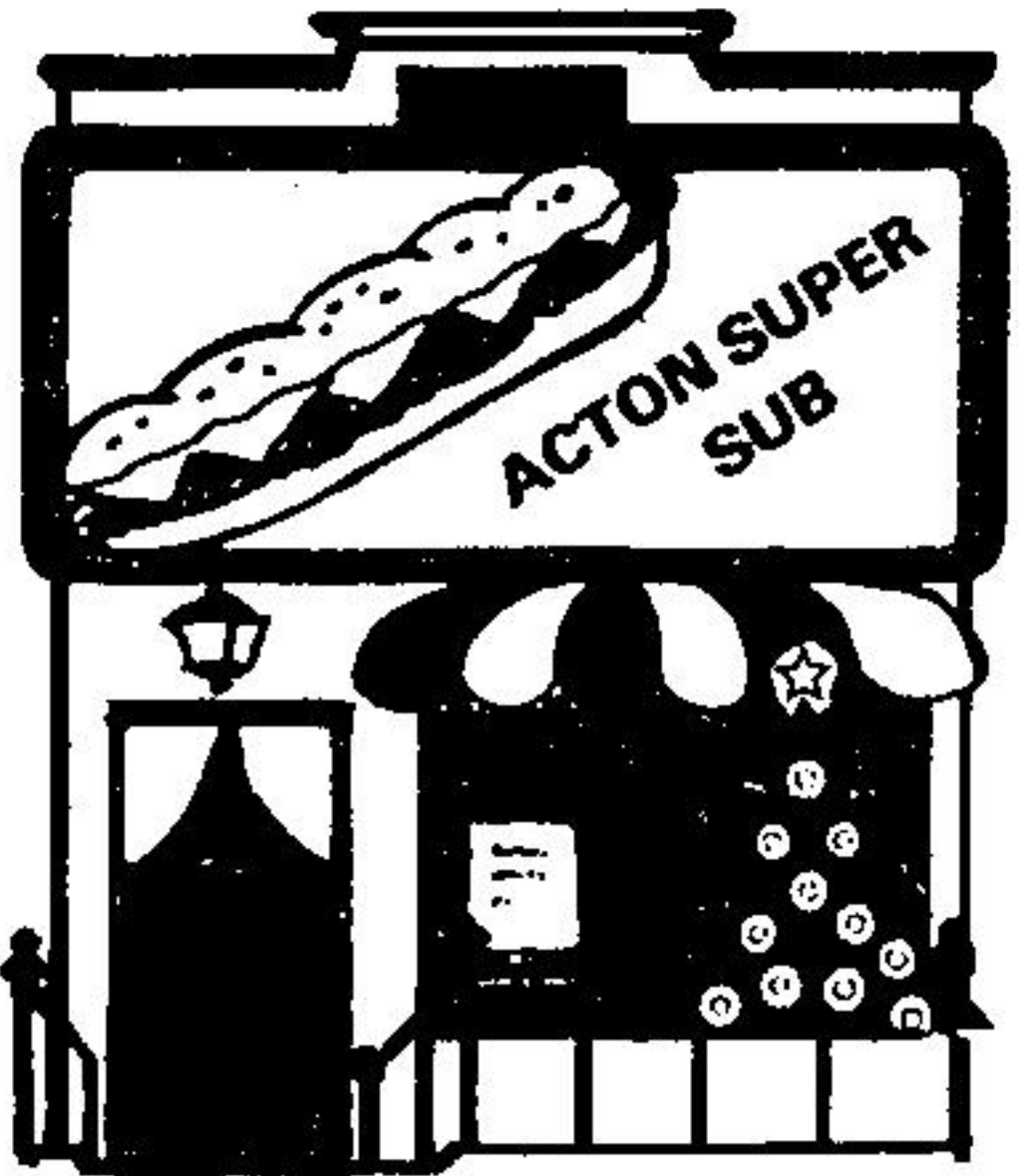
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