

Markham Movie Scene

Suspense romance won't jell

By IAN BAILEY
To call *Against All Odds* complex would be an understatement. Yet one would also be hard pressed to apply terms such as clarity, suspense or passion to this rudimentary tale of romance and suspense.

Odds is a curious package, a single bulky bundle wherein Director Taylor Hackford abandons the corny simplicity of his last film, *An Officer and a Gentleman*, for a pre-occupation with piling beautiful images atop baffling narrative complexity.

Odds is a would-be thriller short of thrills and the compelling simplicity of the best of the genre.

Hackford toys with the elements of a film noir in elegantly photographed settings in Mexico and Los Angeles. Not surprisingly *Odds* is based on a 1947 classic film noir, *Out of the Past*.

The 80s remake is a tangled mass of plot twists, moral ambiguities, sex and the darker sides of the human spirit. In shaping these elements Hackford has created a film so inconsistent that it's virtually three separate films, parts of which work better than others.

In the first Terry Brogan (Jeff Bridges), a pro-football player with a Los Angeles-based team learns about the powerful economic interests tied to his sport after he is placed on waivers.

As he struggles to get back in he becomes involved with the team's wealthy owner (played by Jane Greer, who was featured in *Out of the Past*). A ruthless bookie named Jake Wise (James Woods) emerges out of Terry's past and coerces the athlete into going to Mexico after his girlfriend, Jessie (Rachel Ward), who has stolen \$50,000 from him. Jessie is the team owner's daughter.

The scene shifts to the lush beauty of the forests and beaches of the best parts of Mexico and the most intriguing section of the film. Terry finds Jessie but is distracted from his task by his own rebelliousness and his slowly emerging love for her.

When Terry and Jessie become involved in a gruesome murder amidst the Chichen Itza ruins in Yucatan the scene shifts back to L.A. where Terry finds himself trying to get out of a mess involving his own past, without being destroyed by Jake, and other deadly forces.

These three sections of the one film never really push it ahead to a satisfying conclusion as a whole. Though the first two sections manage to click together the third seems awkward and only serves to drag things out.

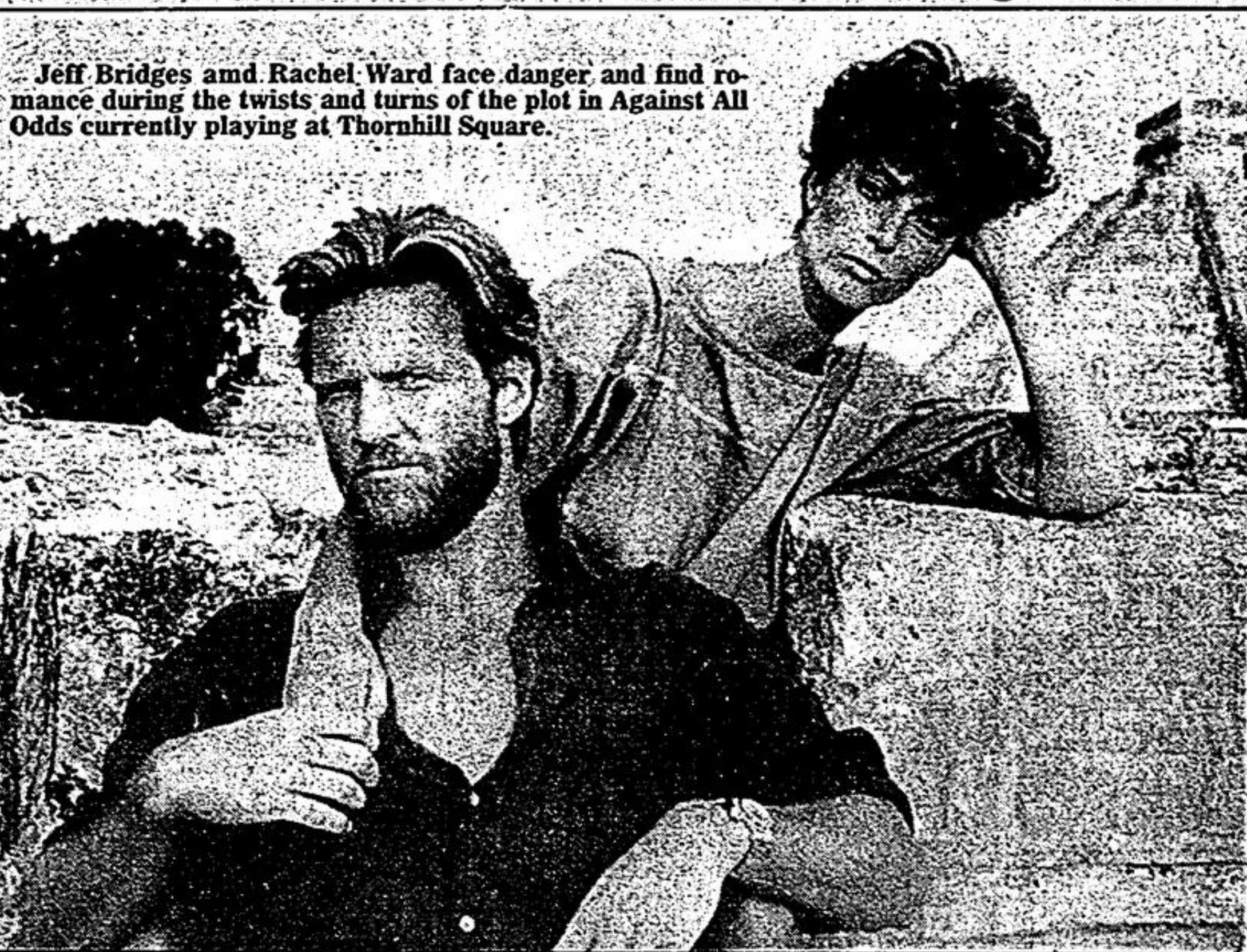
Odds is so crammed with plot twists and turns that one undergoes a form of mental eyestrain in trying to follow them as well as the steamy love affair between Terry and Jessie.

In *An Officer and Gentleman* the simplicity left Richard Gere and Debra Winger room to rise above their material. In *Odds*, Bridges and Ward do not so much rise as stumble, mired in the plot's excesses.

Yet, at least these two are in the foreground. *Odds* is a youth-oriented film in the sense that the older performers from Richard Widmark to Jane Greer and Alex Karras fade into the background.

A perfectly tanned and styled Bridges lends Terry an inherent rugged toughness. James Woods infuses the ruthless bookie with a touch of the psychotic intensity he has displayed in previous films such as *The Onion Field* and *David Cronenberg's Videodrome*.

Rachel Ward, who has moved through various degrees of woodenness in *Sharkey's Machine*, *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* and *The Thorn Birds*, reaches her acting peak here. It's not that much of an accomplishment.



Jeff Bridges and Rachel Ward face danger and find romance during the twists and turns of the plot in *Against All Odds* currently playing at Thornhill Square.

Though she overcomes the creaky awkwardness evident in other roles she is undermined by the postured passion of the film. When she screeches out lines like "Can't anyone love me without it being life or death?" her lack of accomplishment is obvious.

Though not a complete disaster the film is a jumble of indifferent fragments; some compelling, some impressive, but many dull or at odds with the rest.

At the end one is left with a single question; "What the devil was that all about?" The real problem here is that beneath the convoluted layers the answers are not that profound.

Against All Odds is playing at Thornhill Square.

Now playing in town

- Thornhill Square
- 1) *Unfaithfully Yours* (AA)
 - 2) *Against All Odds* (R) - Reviewed this week.
 - 3) *The Buddy System* (PG) - A new comedy starring Richard Dreyfuss and Susan Sarandon.
 - 4) *Pete's Dragon* (F), a Disney re-release from 1977 featuring a mix of animation and live action with Mickey Rooney and Helen Reddy.
- Markville Cinemas
- 1) *Footloose* (AA), a rock musical starring Kevin Bacon and John Lithgow.
 - 2) *Lassiter* (R), a World War II thriller with Tom Selleck.
 - 3) *Never Cry Wolf* (F), a Disney adaptation of the Farley Mowat book of the same name.

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