

**MAP OF THE  
HUMAN HEART**

Directed by

VINCENT WARD

Written by

VINCENT WARD and

LOUIS NOWRA

Produced by

TIM BEVAN and

VINCENT WARD

Starring

JASON SCOTT LEE

ANNE PARILLAUD and

PATRICK BERGIN

Released by

Miramax

At Selected theaters

# LA WEEKLY

## F I L M

**I** "LL TELL YOU A LITTLE ABOUT *MAP OF the Human Heart* if you promise, *promise*, not to turn the page on me. It's about this Eskimo kid Avik who is taken from his village to a Montreal hospital where he's treated for tuberculosis; there he meet Albertine, a half indian girl with whom he forms an intense friendship that lasts a lifetime, through World War II and into the '60s. "Maybe," you're thinking right now, fingers getting twitchy, eyesdarting toward the back of the newspaper, "i should take a look at what Rockie has to say about Taurus this month." And i grant you that nothing about this premise suggests that, 15 minutes into the film, you'll already be telling yourself, "Right. This is what movies are about. This is why we love movies, why we go to them, for those moments when they show us something strange, extraordinary, transporting, unconscious yet recognizable." But that's what happens ith *Map of the Human Heart*, the title of which refers to the X-ray of Albertine that Avik steals when the hospital's nuns, unnerved by the children's closeness, try to separate them forever. Years later Avik, back in his village where he's become completely estranged and is considered bad news and bad luck, is passing the X-ray around to explorers passing through in hopes of tracking Albertine down.

The revelations of *Map of the Human Heart*, which opens here in town next week, are the intangible sort a dream offers, unnamed and not fully expressed. The movie glances off this and that theme, most notably one of race: avik (Jason Scott Lee) becomes a fighter pilot for England's Royal Air Force and stares in the face of a white barbarity so immense he could never have imagined it if he hadn't seen it for himself. When he finds Albertine again in London, herself in uniform and studying the photos he's been sending her from the skies, thier love is doomed by her

determination to escape her racial ambiguity and marry into a little-girl's idea of purity she's never outgrown. The film is full of emotional boomerangs tossed in childhood that return in adulthood with nearly fatal force: the white mapmaker (patrick Bergin) who took Avik to Montreal in order to save his life will later take back that which Avik's heart most desires; the childhood magic of Montreal at night as seen from a plane anticipates the hellish vision of Dresden is nothing more or less than a lover's ervenge for once being jilted. And Albertine's fairy-tale aspirations are accompanied by a blithe fairy-tale ruthlessness. She'll cheerfully slam a door on Avik's hand in an attempt to break it, so that he can't be sent on another mission. "wrong hand," he informs her, raising the other one, "this is my trigger finger".

Albertine likes Avik's trigger finger fine, just not his color. As played by Anne Parillaud, who got to be Bridget Fonda in *La Femme Nikita* before Fonda got to be Parillaud in *Point of No Return*, albertine has a radiance that's also deadly and opportunistic. Standing in the inferno of Dresden Avik decides the people of his village were right - he's a shitload of bad luck - and so, not being able to bear the idea of bringing ill fortune to Albertine as well, he forsakes her just as she's ready to sacrifice her childish dreams for a grown-up passion. The memories Avik is left with at the end of his life prove to be stronger than reality; they float above, looking down on him. Directed, co-written and co-produced by native New Zealander Vincent Ward, *Map of the Human Heart* finds the latitudes of memory and love crossing the longitudes of time and event, where the landscape glimmers with messages like those that Albertine decodes in Avik's aerial pictures. **LA**

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**"EXTRAORDINARY !**

**This is what movies are all about. This is why we love movies!"**

**Steve Erickson - LA WEEKLY**