

VIDEO

Pride and Secrets

BY PEGGY LUHRS

Saving Face
Alice Wu, director
Starring Joan Chen,
Lynn Chen, Michelle Krusiec
Wolfe Video
In English with some
subtitles for Chinese
97 minutes, Rated R

I guess each ethnic group will need to tell its own version of the coming out story, and *Saving Face* is basically the Chinese version. Directed with skill and a lovely light touch by Alice Wu, this is the story of a mother and daughter and how they come to accept each other and understand that following their own life desires is more important than being dutiful daughters.

Wil (Michelle Krusiec) is a doctor; a very good and very busy surgeon. She seems to devote her life to her work, interrupted only by the various dates her mother arranges for her with a series of men she has no interest in. She soon meets Vivian Ching (Lynn Chen) not knowing Viv is the daughter of her boss. They meet by the hospital vending machines, with Vivian being

the flirtatious initiator of the contact. Vivian is a ballet dancer. They begin an affair just as Wil's widowed mother Hwei-Lan Gao (Joan Chen) shows up on her doorstep pregnant.

Hwei-Lan Gao's being mid-

Wil around more, wants her to meet her friends and asks, "Why don't you just tell her?" "She knows," Wil replies, "She walked in on me and my girlfriend once, and that is when she started fixing me up." For a

Chinese American culture and are introduced to a series of interesting characters. Joan Chen does an excellent understated turn as the publicly humiliated mother. The romance between Wil and Vivian is sweet and



Hwei-Lan Gao's being middle-aged, single, and pregnant has not made her traditional Chinese father happy, and he ousts her from the family home in Flushing.

dle-aged, single, and pregnant has not made her traditional Chinese father happy, and he ousts her from the family home in Flushing. Soon it is Wil fixing up Mom with a series of men, hoping to find her a husband and appease her grandfather. With her mother as a roommate Wil feels she cannot stay out all night with Vivian. Vivian wants

while Mom dates a series of inappropriate men and Wil and Vivian continue a relationship that increasingly frustrates Vivian.

But things can't go on this way and the movie needs to build to its dramatic moment when true love sorts it out, at least for mom.

Lower Manhattan makes a lovely backdrop for this indie film which has strong production values. We get a glimpse of

believable, and there are a lot of slyly humorous and well-observed moments.

The Sapphic Cinema audience loved this one, and I'd rate it high on the unfortunately not very long list of lesbian love stories. ▼

Peggy Luhrs runs Sapphic Cinema nights at the R.U.1.2? Queer Community Center. She lives and writes in Burlington.



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