

# Devil Angel

Review by Mark Pollard



## Synopsis

In this romantic drama Ng Chi Kit (Youshi Bin) faces bankruptcy in a stock market crash. Unwilling to go to jail, Chi Kit and his girlfriend, Tsui Siu Suen (Vivian Hsu) decide to run away together. The police finally catch up with Chi Kit but not before he agrees to an "indecent proposal" with To Mung Hung, a wealthy and terminally ill woman who in turn bails Chi Kit from prison. This inevitably short relationship will alter the emotional bonds between Chi Kit and Siu Suen forever.

## Review

(3 Stars) This earlier film from THE ACCIDENTAL SPY co-star Vivian Hsu is a re-working of the INDECENT PROPOSAL scenario, here with a man offered a large sum of money to entertain a wealthy woman. The fact that the woman is terminally ill and the man is on the run from authorities adds an intriguing complexity to the plot. The real challenge for the film comes from a balancing act between questions of morality and exploitive content that succeeds to varying degrees. The film's tone is effectively dramatic and fatalistic in a Shakespearian manner. Like Romeo and Juliet, Chi Kit and Siu Suen are lovers whose future's are uncertain. As the pair begin their flight, they renew their vow to die together. As the film progresses, we first see Siu Suen's commitment tested when Chi Kit first visits Mung Hung. Later, Chi Kit's commitment is tested by his compassion for Mung Hung. A blood oath and the threat of a revolver ending each other's life aptly provides the visual representation of the couple's zealotry. Without disclosing the ending, it is sufficient to say their is a deliciously bittersweet and ironic resolution to their plight. From a technical standpoint, the film suffers from stylistic overkill. Muddled aspects to the film include a series of interspersed flashbacks, dream sequences filled with graphic violence such as gun shots to the head, and gratuitous sexual encounters. An occasional element of Hong Kong cinema is the use of flashbacks for the purpose of adding dramatic punch to the film. Rarely does it help the story along and usually causes more confusion than enlightenment. In this case, its the combination of fantasy sequences and flashbacks in the same film that may bewilder the viewer. While it may have been intentional, it becomes hard to discern present from past and present reality from present fantasy. Another disappointment are the frequent love scenes that edge this title into the soft porn category while, cluttering the film with useless content. Male fans of Vivian Hsu may disagree.

Nice peripheral touches include a roller coaster zooming overhead as Chi Kit vainly chases a thief who has stolen the couple's remaining cash which adds an urgency to the scene. The soundtrack borrows heavily

from American music, fitting in well with the exception of an overused Otis Redding tune.

Beyond the trite scenes of sex and violence lies a story that raises questions about the limits of love and devotion and the dangers of relational excess. Chi Kit and Siu Suen both undergo a subtle change throughout their misadventure that permanently alters their lives. The success of this story lies in the film's objective stance which leaves any judgments to the viewer. DEVIL ANGEL may be burdened by obsessive stylistic and exploitive direction but the underlying theme and final outcome are compelling reasons to give the film a chance.