

To Live And Die In L.A.

Oaks Six

I suppose it would be interesting to see how the Treasury Department

prints money, but it's a heck of a lot more interesting to see how a counterfeiter does it. That is a scene near the beginning of *To Live And Die In L.A.*, the new thriller from director William Friedkin, who gave us the classic, *The French Connection*.

We watch as Eric Masters (William Dafoe) makes the plates and then prints enough \$20 bills to fill up a huge laundry bag. It's a fun scene; the kind of scene that makes you want to take notes. It also seems to be accurate, which is more than can be said for the rest of the movie.

Masters is a counterfeiter, and he kills a Secret Service agent who gets too close to his operation. The agent's partner was Richard Chance

(William L. Petersen), and he vows to get revenge.

His new partner is a by-the-book agent named John Vukovich (John Pankow), but Chance makes it perfectly clear that he will do anything to catch Masters.

Fine, we can accept that. Revenge doesn't follow the rules. But, Chance doesn't want to kill Masters. No, he wants to bring him to justice. He sets up an elaborate sting operation for which he needs \$30,000 in front money. Yet, the agency will only approve \$10,000 for a sting.

So, what does our hero do? He decides to rob a Chinese diamond smuggler who is arriving in the country with \$50,000 and then go

ahead with the sting operation on his own.

When the Chinese smuggler is killed and they find out that he was an FBI agent, they *still* go ahead with their plans! This is foolishness. If arrested, Masters would unquestionably be allowed to walk, and the two agents would certainly lose their jobs and be thrown into jail.

Still, if you completely ignore the plot, you might enjoy the movie. The acting is solid, even if the heroes have to do incredibly stupid things. Dafoe is especially memorable as the counterfeiter, Masters.

Also, there is one terrific chase scene, and the cinematography by

Robby Muller is gorgeous. -But, that's not easy to see. Most of the time, all you see are the gaping holes in the plot.

By Michael Glitz