

MAKE 'EM LAUGH

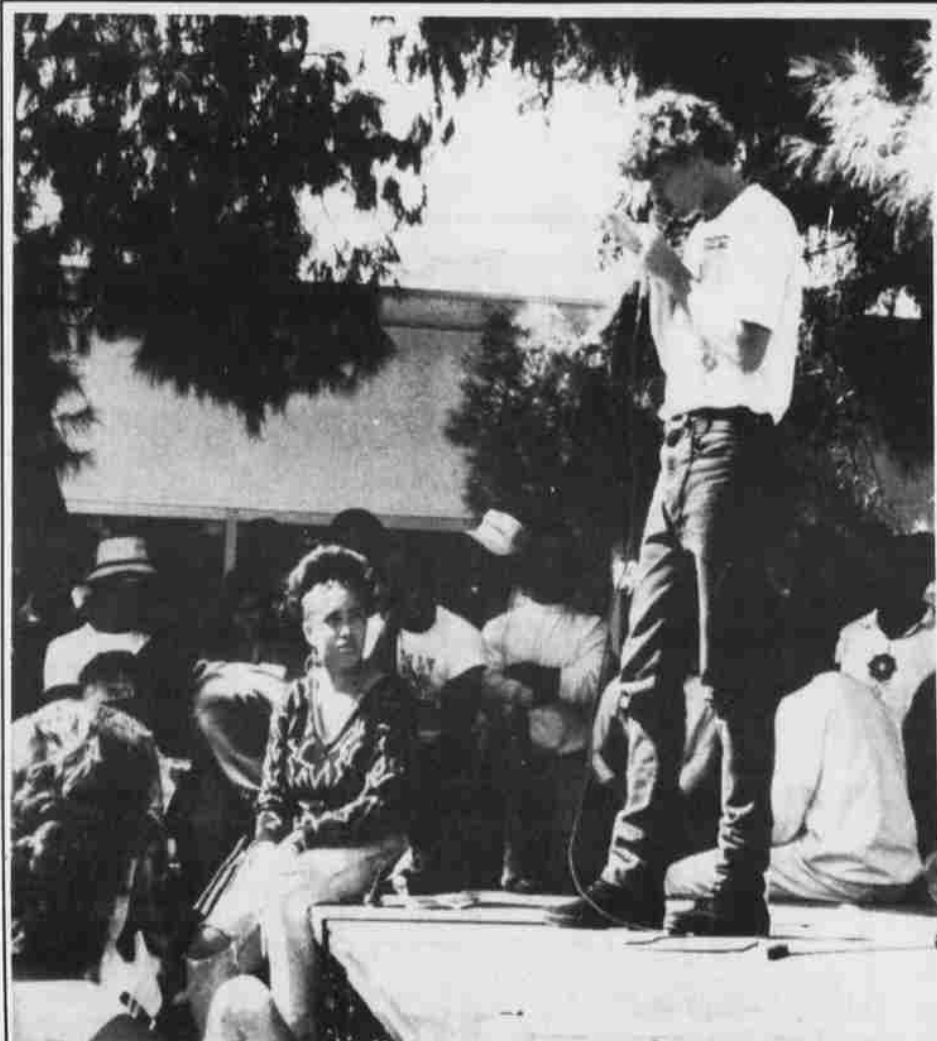


photo by Eric Archambault

**NO TRACTION IN THE SHEETS-** Comedian Rich Hall explains his views on satin sheets to UNLV students in the MSU courtyard, Friday afternoon.

'Black Rain' falls short

By Deon De La O  
YELLIN' REBEL

"Black Rain," the newest film by gloss master extraordinaire Ridley Scott, is an exercise in cliches, violence and the end, futility. The film, about an American cop's struggle to bring a violent Japanese mobster to justice in Japan, gives no insight into Japanese culture. While beautifully filmed and admirably acted, Black Rain ends up like Scott's last film, "Someone to Watch Over Me": a glitzy package with no heart or soul.

Michael Douglas stars as tough-talokin', Harley ridin' Noo Yawk cop Nick Conklin, a street smart flatfoot and loving father with, shall we say, money problems.

Nick gets into a bit of trouble for using funds "liberated" from drug dealers by some other policemen. The wretched bureaucrats are drooling to see him destroyed, and Nick seems as if he's had it for sure.

But as luck would have it, something happens to alter the course of his life—he and another cop named Charlie (nicely played by Andy "The Untouchables" Garcia) witness the murders of some Japanese businessmen by a member of the yakuza, the Japanese mafia.

This particular member, Sato (stunningly played by Yasuko Matsada) is supposed to represent the new, young Japan: brash, impatient and materialistic. Sato wears what looks like Issey Miyake suits and is not a nice person. He wants it all now, and will knife anyone trying to get in his way. Needless to say, the oyubans (the godfathers) do not approve of our baby-boomer killer.

After brutally murdering two rivals (those with soft stomachs should be wary about the violence in this film), Sato tries to escape but is apprehended by our hero, Conklin, who afterwards discovers he must bring Sato back to Osaka. Conklin isn't in the mood for sushi, but decides to cooperate. He, along with Garcia, take Sato back.

One thing leads to another, and Sato does a switcheroo and escapes. Conklin is really, really mad now,

and rather than just going home, he decides to stay and get Sato, cussing all the way. The Japanese police force doesn't especially appreciate our hero's help, but pairs him with Matsumoto, a reluctant Japanese detective, played by Japanese superstar Ken Takura. Takura, like the rest of the force, thinks Douglas is crazy.

The film does humorously at times capture the frustration of being in a foreign land and not knowing the language, and gives insight into the shadowy world of the yakuza—a world where in duty and honor count even in organized crime.

As Nick and his partner, who is later murdered by Sato and his gang of motorcycle thugs, get more involved in the case, they discover exactly what Sato and the rest of the yakuza is fighting over—a plate that almost flawlessly recreates a \$100 bill.

The reason for the counterfeiting, as later explained to Conklin (who spews out one hairy cliché after another, courtesy of a very weak script) by an oyuban is totally ridiculous, and makes the film seem even more pretentious.

Nick enters the yakuza's world with help from a beautiful American bar hostess, played by the bewitching Kate Capshaw. Unfortunately, Capshaw's role is nothing more than an over-hyped cameo. She's very appealing and deserves much better.

Douglas goes through the motions in his role, and is good despite the trite dialogue, but it is Takura, as a wise policeman who knows all too well how the Japanese police—and the rest of the country—react to the yakuza with smug apathy, who shines. Takura's charisma makes his character truly memorable.

The nighttime Osaka scenes, with "Blade Runner"—style smoke, ceiling fans and shadows are impressive. But in the end, (and a very predictable end at that) the film just leaves the viewer empty.

"Black Rain" will make a zillion at the box office (with producers Sherry Lansing and Stanley Jaffe at the helm, how could it miss?) But considering that Scott has made far more impressive films, like "Blade Runner" and "Alien", one wonders why he doesn't try for something a little better.

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