

# House of Flying Daggers (2004)

Rated PG-13. Our ratings: V-5 ; L-1 1; S/N-5

Zhang Yimou is a director equally at home making little screen gems like *The Road Home* and *Not One Less*, as well as historical epics such as *To Live*—and now he has made the second of his fantasy sword epics (Known as the wuxia film genre among aficionados). If you enjoyed *Hero*, you'll be in seventh heaven while watching this gorgeously filmed tale, set during the declining years of China's Tang Dynasty (roughly in the 9th century of the Christian era). Like great Italian opera, one should not worry much about the plot, but just settle back and enjoy the spectacle.

The two set pieces are the EchoHouse of Flying Daggers Game and a battle in the bamboo grove, both of which compare favorably to those in *Crouching Tiger*. Mei is a blind dancer in a geisha house who is challenged to hit each large drum with her weighted long sleeve when a police agent throws a nut against it. Soon she and dozens of thrown nuts are hurling around the hall, creating a powerful, staccato rhythm. In the other scene she and her lover are attacked by a host of warriors who travel through the treetops. The sound of whooshing bamboo poles and clicking of swords creates another memorable audio sequence. A feast for ear

and eye, this is a film for all who enjoy fantasy and spectacle, revealing how drab and unimaginative The Matrix is in comparison.