Q8402 THE QUIET AMERICAN (AUSTRALIA/USA, 2002)

Credits: director, Phillip Noyce; writer, Christopher Hampton, Robert Schenkkan; story, Graham Greene.

Cast: Michael Caine, Do Thi Hai Yen, Brendan Fraser.

Summary: Remake of the 1957 war film. Set in Vietnam in the early 1950s during the Indochina War. When the body of CIA agent Alden Pyle (Fraser) is found floating in the Saigon River, the French authorities question British journalist Thomas Fowler (Caine) and his mistress Phuong (Do) who were involved with Pyle. In flashback, Fowler recalls his relationship with Pyle from their first meeting. Serving undercover in the charity “Friends for Free Asia,” Pyle is supplying aid to the militarist Cao Dai sect which he hopes will serve as a ‘third force’ (between the French colonialists and the Communist Viet Minh), but his naive, ill-informed actions lead to further bloodshed. Pyle saves Fowler’s life in a Viet Minh ambush, but Pyle is a rival for Phuong’s affections and Fowler also suspects him of involvement in a terrorist bombing. Fowler betrays Pyle to the Viet Minh who murder him, but Fowler ultimately learns from the French police that Pyle was innocent. This film version is more faithful to the Graham Greene novel than the 1958 Audie Murphy film. It illustrates Greene’s belief that American actions in Vietnam were ignorant of the country’s history and had a propensity to get people killed.

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Ryan, Desmond. “Greene’s gray areas have played well on the big screen” Times union [Albany, NY] (Feb 27, 2003), p. P41.

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Strickler, Jeff. “ ‘Quiet American’ speaks volumes if you dig a little” Star tribune [Minneapolis, MN] (Feb 7, 2003), p. 13E.


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