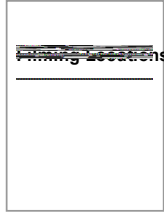


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User Rating: **7.1/10** [1,775 votes](#)

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Director: [John Woo](#)

Writers: [John Woo](#) (screenplay) & [Khan Chan](#) (screenplay) ...
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Release Date: 10 July 2008 (China) [more](#)

Genre: [Action](#) | [Adventure](#) | [Drama](#) [more](#)

Plot: Based on the events during the Three Kingdoms period in Ancient China in which specifically told in the title, The Battle of Red Cliffs. [full summary](#) | [full synopsis](#)

Plot Keywords: [Based On Novel](#)

NewsDesk: [John Woo Movie Is China's Biggest Ever Seller](#) (From [WENN](#), 12 August 2008, 12:04 PM, PDT)
[\(5 articles\)](#) [Stuntman Killed On John Woo Movie](#) (From [Studio Briefing](#), 11 June 2008, 10:36 AM, PDT)

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Cast (Credited cast)

	Chen Chang	...	Sun Quan
	Yong Hou	...	Lu Su
	Jun Hu	...	Zhao Yun
	Takehi Kaneshiro	...	Zhuge Liang
	Tony Leung Chiu Wai	...	Zhou Yu
	Chiling Lin	...	Xiao Qiao
	Shido Nakamura	...	Wa Long
	Jia Song	...	Li Ji
	Chun Sun		
	Dawei Tong	...	Sun Shucai
	Jiang Tong	...	Li Tong
	Qingxiang Wang	...	Kong Rong
	Yong You	...	Liu Bei
	Fengyi Zhang	...	Cao Cao
	Wei Zhao	...	Sun Shangxiang

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A Nutshell Review: Red Cliff, 12 July 2008

Author: [DICK STEEL](#) from Singapore

A friend of mine revealed to me that John Woo acknowledged parallels between characters in his movies, and characters from the Three Kingdom era, and that General Zhao Yun was one of Woo's personal favourites. This admiration for General Zhao's qualities cannot be more obvious when it is he who opens the first battle proper, with a very familiar character episode involving the rescue of the infant son (and future lord) of his master Liu Bei, thereby sealing his reputation of valor, earning admiration even from enemy Cao Cao. Fans of Liu Bei's camp will undoubtedly cheer at the appearances of his sworn brothers General Guan Yu (who is worshiped as a Deity until this very day, and remains one of my favourite characters besides Zhao Yun) and General Zhang Fei, whose gruffness translates to instant war-ready prowess. While Liu's army is clearly routed in a military loss, it explained the dilemma of Liu's leadership. One which is based on sincerity, a quality which persuaded his chief military strategist and genius all round Zhuge Liang (Takeshi Kaneshiro) to join his cause, but one which lacked military strength in numbers, despite having some of the best generals of the time under his leadership.

Which of course Cao Cao admires and probably is envious about, given his superior strength in numbers came from surrendering armies, whose loyalty remains questionable, and of course with individual generals who can't surpass the abilities of those from Liu. Playing the king like a puppet and having him issue a decree for permission to pursue Liu Bei who has fled southwards, he sets his sights also on warlord Sun Quan, for a more personal reason akin to the story of Helen of Troy. Zhuge Liang, knowing their current weakness, seeks an alliance between the armies of Liu and Sun Quan, and this forms most of the first half, where he had to play envoy to cajole and persuade, especially in convincing Sun Quan's most trusted adviser Zhou Yu (Tony Leung) that war is inevitable and they should form a win-win partnership.

And here's where great minds think alike, and watching both Zhou Yu and Zhuge Liang do a friendly pit against each other is nothing short of amazing, where so little says so much. It helps of course that both Tony Leung and Takeshi Kaneshiro have been paired up as leading men on screen before, in Wong Kar-wai's *Chungking Express* and in Andrew Lau and Alan Mak's *Confession of Pain* too, lending some much established and credible chemistry as men who share admiration in each other's ability, especially when Zhou Yu seemed to have a fairer balance between fighting skill and intellect. With one side having highly disciplined soldiers with good morale, and the other having renowned generals to be leaders, it doesn't take a genius to realize the advantages gained in fending off a common enemy together.

The fight sequences were pure spectacle, with old school wire work combined with technological wizardry to showcase some large scale battle sequences at a macro level, or to highlight the immense naval numbers that Cao Cao brings to battle. Formations and strategies take centerstage in a first major confrontation on land, where one gets to see John Woo's interpretation of Zhuge Liang's "ba-gua" (8 stratagems) strategy, made more entertaining through the continuation of what we have already seen in each general's fighting ability, each given a unique style befitting the characters in folklore, such as Guan Yu and his Guan Dao (Green Dragon Crescent Blade) and Zhao Yun (Hu Jun) and his spear. There's the usual bellowing cape and slow motion in Woo's signature style, but these were kept to a minimum, as are the pigeons (though they do make an appearance, but serving some purpose).

Perhaps it is the success of the fight sequences that had left some lamenting for more, but bear in mind this is just but the first half of the movie, setting things up. The major war sequences of course are left in the second movie which we will get to see come early next year. Like *The Matrix Reloaded* and *Revolutions*, expect the next movie to go on an all out assault. I felt that already is a fair balance of drama and action here, especially when this installment has to cover a broad base given numerous characters, which should provide fans (of Three Kingdoms) something to cheer about. Chang Chen provides his Sun Quan with enough self-doubt, and

in a small story arc has to seek his inner confidence ala King Leonidas in 300, while model Lin Chiling's much touted debut movie appearance, was limited to just a few scenes of lovey-dovey moments, which unfortunately for audiences in Singapore, her sex scene with Tony Leung got edited out in order for distributors to get a PG rating to put more bums on seats.

I had wondered how Tony Leung would have faired as Zhuge Liang instead of Kaneshiro, but felt that the musical chairs casting somehow became a blessing in disguise. Kaneshiro's good looks might have made some doubt his ability to play the smartest man alive during the era, but he did an excellent job in bringing out the humility and self-deprecation of the man whose never flashy nor overconfident of his abilities, and one who swears his talents to his lord Liu Bei. Tony Leung on the other hand brought about a fine balance of brains and brawn to the Zhou Yu character, whom I suspect in Woo's version, would be credited with much success for his part in Red Cliff, rather than the accolades all going to Zhuge Liang. After you see the reliable Tony Leung in this role, you'll know for sure that Chow Yun-Fatt could probably never had brought the kind of gravitas Leung brought to the role.

Red Cliff is hands down highly recommended

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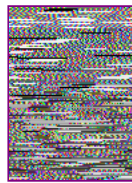
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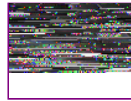
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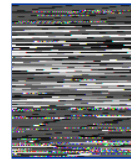
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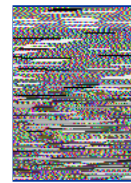
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