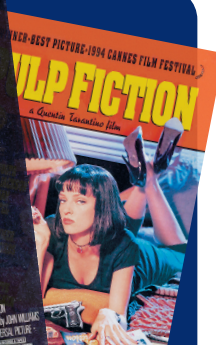


THIS WEEK'S CLASSIC MOVIE

by Madeline Pritchard



Decked out in Armani threads and tearing around in a speedboat or souped-up Ferrari, *Miami Vice* cops Crockett and Tubbs (played by Don Johnson and Phillip Michael Thomas) defined cocaine-dusted 1980s cool. Legendary director Michael Mann didn't actually create the programme, but he produced it and, as the showrunner, is credited with setting the series' style.

Decades later, during the making of Mann's film *Ali*, Jamie Foxx pitched to him a vision for a movie remake of the show, which would, of course, star Foxx himself as Tubbs. Mann was resistant at first. 'My initial reaction was, you've got to be kidding me, why would I want to go back to *Miami Vice*?' But Foxx's persistence carried over to the set of their next collaboration, *Collateral*, and won over the film-maker.

Perhaps Foxx's golden streak, which culminated in 2005 with him being nominated for a Best Supporting Actor award (for *Collateral*) and winning Best Actor (for *Ray*) at the same Oscars ceremony, led to his behaviour in the build-up to the *Miami Vice* shoot: the star demanded more money, first billing over his co-star Colin Farrell and a private jet to bring him to Florida.

Mann has his own reputation for being difficult and was at his most exacting and yet indecisive here. The script was being rewritten daily and it became impossible for crew members to keep up with his contradictory requests. Delays took production



Miami Vice

Troubled shoot: Colin Farrell and Jamie Foxx as Crockett and Tubbs; inset, Gong Li as Isabella

'Luck ran out. This was too good to last.'



into hurricane season, which endangered cast and crew alike. Then, when filming relocated to the Dominican

Republic, a local police officer got into a beef with a guard supplied by the Dominican military, pulled a gun, and was shot and wounded. Foxx immediately left the country – and swore he would never film outside of the US again.

This scuppered the movie's intended ending – a huge gun battle that was to be shot in Paraguay. But Mann has refused to publicly place the blame at Foxx's feet: 'I'm not going

to dish dirt about Jamie. He has a unique process of acting, and most people don't understand it. He and I are real close. That allows us to disagree about stuff.'

Farrell, meanwhile, recalls almost nothing about the production. His alcoholism was at its peak, and he went straight into rehab after filming wrapped. It's astonishing, then, how much his performance feels like an intentional part of the fabric of the picture. Farrell seems lost – but then this version of Crockett is a man so deeply undercover that he no longer knows for certain which way is up.

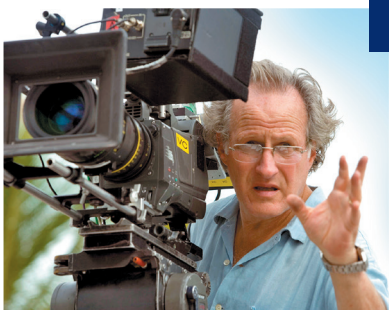
Mann's vision becomes clear as the story's focus

shifts to the poignant, doomed relationship between Crockett and Isabella (Gong Li). The pair escape the claustrophobic dealings of the cartel, run away together to Cuba and fall ruinously in love. It's then that Mann's terse dialogue takes on the tone of classic noir.

It's an impressionistic work, more tone poem than thriller. So, with audiences expecting another *Heat*, it's not surprising that the film failed to make back its \$150m budget. But 16 years on, the film has its fans. *Spring Breakers* director Harmony Korine has cited *Miami Vice* as a major influence: 'When I watch that film, I don't even pay attention to what they're saying or the storyline. I love the colours, I love the texture.'

The film's ascent to cult status has not persuaded the major players, though. Mann and Farrell have both expressed their disappointment with the movie – Mann with the altered ending, Farrell with his performance. And Foxx has simply never discussed it.

Tricky customers: Director Michael Mann (left); below, Foxx and Farrell



Wednesday ■ TCM Movies ■ 9.00pm