

Queen of Hearts

UK : 1989 : dir. John Amiel : : 112 min
 prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:
Ian Hawkes; Tat Whalley; Stefano Spagnoli; Rhys Brock
 Joseph Long; Anita Zagaria; Vittorio Duse; Vittorio Amandola; Eileen Way; Roberto Scateni;
 Alec Bregonzi; Ronan Vivert; Jimmy Lambert; Anna Pernicci

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω 8 € M ♂	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"A ten-year old, part of a large and happy Italian family living in London, watches while his father risks everything by gambling. Odd and ultimately unsatisfactory mix of fantasy and reality, contrasting Italian warmth and British cool to the detriment of both. * "

Video Movie Guide 1993 review:

"A comedy-drama with dialogue primarily in English but a sensibility that is very Italian. By running away from her marriage to a wealthy Sicilian, the beautiful Rosa (Anita Zagaria) sets in motion a tragic and funny tale of revenge. Unrated, the film has profanity [*sic*] and violence. **** "

The Virgin Film Guide review:

"A jewel of a film from director John Amiel, who directed Dennis Potter's award-winning **"The Singing Detective"**. **"QUEEN OF HEARTS"** is a mystical fable of love and revenge, seen through the imaginative eyes of a child. Now grown, Eddie (Ian Hawkes) narrates the flashback story of his close-knit Italian family, who emigrate to England after WWII, when his father, Danilo (Joseph Long) and mother, Rosa (Anita Zagaria), elope, escaping her arranged marriage to the wealthy Barbariccia (Vittorio Amandola).

On the advice of a talking pig, Danilo makes enough money gambling to become the proprietor of a London restaurant, the Lucky Café, supporting his family until Barbariccia, who has also emigrated and become the owner of several gambling houses, wins everything Danilo owns in a card game.

The stage is then set for the **"STING"**-like scam the family works to get even with Barbariccia. There may be a few Italian immigrant family clichés along the way, but the characters in **"QUEEN OF HEARTS"** are treated sensitively, with much humour and warmth – never patronised. Much credit has to go to the film's wonderful cast, hand-picked by director Amiel from what he called "a treasure trove" of relative unknowns. "

The Sunday Times review:

"A rare screen glimpse of London's own Little Italy: a family of immigrants in the post-war years, perceived by a 10-year old boy who acts as narrator. The catalyst is his father, a gambling addict played by Joseph Long, whose café is in jeopardy. Crisis occurs when his wife's jilted fiancé (Vittorio Amandola) arrives to exact a long-awaited revenge. The debut film of the British director of **"SOMMERSBY"**."

The Film Yearbook vol.9 review:

"A thoroughly disarming, highly unusual little film set mainly in a semi-imaginary

London-Italian community where the 1950s and the 1980s seem to co-exist, "**QUEEN OF HEARTS**" feels more like an Italian movie than a British one. Narrated by a romantic young lad (Spagnoli)¹ whose father (Long) runs a café that boasts a gleaming espresso machine, it's partly an episodic family comedy, but there's also a melodramatic and sometimes magical plot about a vendetta spanning the decades which takes the film into the realm of the bizarre. Poker games in Italian clubs, visits from elderly and not-entirely-welcome relatives, and a complicated set of relationships among the family and patrons of the restaurant are gradually worked through, and the film's gradual accumulation of nice little moments adds up into an entrancing spell."

[no listing in "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "The Critics' Film Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995" or "Variety Movie Guide 1993"]

Radio Times reviews:

"Here's the whimsical tale of Rosa and Danilo, an Italian couple who elope to London, win at cards and start their own café. This heartwarming comedy has no stars, big budget or special effects, just a funny script, smashing performances, and the kind of daring direction you'd expect from the man who made "**The Singing Detective**" - Jon Amiel making his feature debut. **** "

"The "Film On Four" season continues with the network premiere of this tale of love, revenge and cappuccino, from Jon Amiel, director of "**The Singing Detective**". Three generations of the Lucca family live under one roof in London's Italian quarter. Their story is seen through the eyes of 10-year old Eddie Lucca."

¹ Spagnoli plays Eddie as a toddler; the 10-year old Eddie who narrates the story is played by Ian Hawkes

No further information currently available

See also "**BADKONAK-E SEFID**" and "**BASHU**" - both recent Iranian films, and subject index under **ARAB WORLD / MIDDLE EAST**.