

Danny Aiello shines in a subdued 'Ruby'

By Mike Clark
USA TODAY

Ruby, as in Jack, is a trade-off for Oliver Stone's JFK. Unlike the latter, it doesn't assault you like a drunk at a party, which is certainly a relief. Then again, Ruby isn't all that thrilling as cinema — the sole rock not yet heaved at Stone.

Like *The Long Walk Home*, *Scandal* and a lot of TV docudramas, Ruby hits foolproof buttons on our collective memory bank amid adequate period recreations. Its best feature: Danny Aiello's title performance as the Dallas club owner who shot Lee Harvey Oswald. Cast as a pudgy, hot-tempered hood with murky Mafia connections, Aiello avoids the temptation to bellow or otherwise overact.

As Ruby has it — and by now, one JFK assassination theory sounds as good as another — its subject shot Oswald to expose a mob-CIA conspiracy he didn't perceive until the



ANOTHER JFK VIEW: Jack Ruby, played by Danny Aiello, lunges forward to shoot Lee Harvey Oswald in 'Ruby,' which focuses on Ruby in the days prior to President Kennedy's assassination.

president was being shot. To be sure, he knew the players. Before the film's morcade climax, we've seen

Ruby as an FBI informant, mob errand boy, and emcee at his own Carousal club, which didn't cater to Romper Room

clientele. Sherilyn Fenn (*Twin Peaks*) does nicely as Candy Cane, a composite of real-life strippers

Ruby
★★½ (out of four)
Danny Aiello, Jack Ruby
Sherilyn Fenn, Candy Cane
Arless Howard, Maxwell
A Triumph Releasing Corp. release. Produced by Sigurjon Sigvatsson and Steve Golin. Directed by John Mackenzie. Screenplay by Stephen Davis. In theaters nationally. Rated R (polarity, violence, mild sexual situations).

and a Marilyn Monroe look-alike. Candy has a presidential tryst here, so the Monroe resemblance may be an in-joke; also amusing is the designation of Frank Sinatra as "Tony Montana," a singer whose numbers are always backed by patented Blue Eyes arrangements. Too many of these games, though, end up working against the movie.

Ruby is just competent enough to be John Mackenzie's best since he directed 1980's *The Long Good Friday*. It may, though, be time for a moratorium on JFK fare before we get John Connally — the Movie.