

Searching for Bobby Fischer

(Vapid UK title = "Innocent Moves")

US : 1993 : dir. Steven Zaillian : << studio >>

: 110 min

prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:

[Max Pomeranc](#); [Michael Nirenberg](#)

Joe Mantegna; Ben Kingsley; Joan Allen; Larry "Laurence" Fishburne; Robert Stephens

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	KBytes	Ω	□	≠	Z	⚡	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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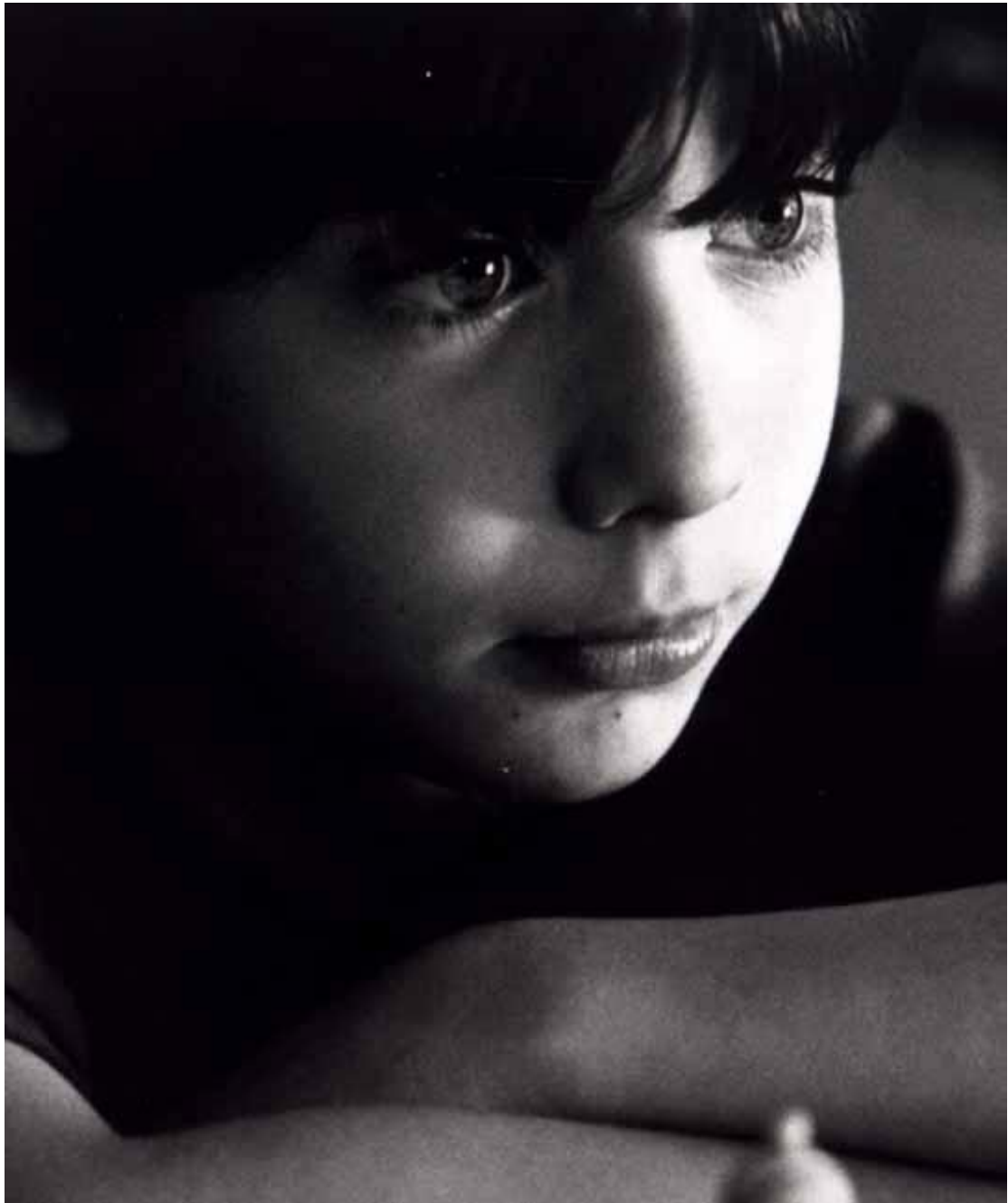
Selling chess to the Nintendo generation – Max Pomeranc remains prudently noncommittal

Source: Empire

Empire review:

"Sports writer Fred Waitzkin (Mantegna) expects his seven-year old son Josh (Pomeranc) to be a Little League baseball star and is rather surprised when the kid wants to hang out in the park with the hustlers and dead-beats who play chess on the public boards. It gradually emerges that Josh is America's greatest potential master since Bobby Fischer, whose erratic career and periodic disappearances punctuate the film.

Fred hires Bruce Pandolfini (Kingsley), an Irish-accented burn-out, to coach the kid to tournament level, and arguments rage about how best to treat the pre-teen genius. Meanwhile, a deadly rival emerges in Jonathan Poe (Michael Nirenberg), a monstrous child who has been raised by Robert Stephens to be a soulless chess ninja. In the finale, the kids face each other over the board and, with the crazed spectre of Fischer somewhere about, the film upholds the values of well-rounded normality over creepy weirdness, though the



Chess is not a game, not a science, but an art, Ben Kingsley asserts in the film

Source: indeterminate website

actual outcome of the final match includes an unexpected twist.

Zaillian's first feature is funny, tense and demanding, with cerebral clashes to equal the physical bouts of Rocky and a very subtle, very powerful wash of side issues. Pomeranc, a chess whiz but not previously an actor, is a miraculous movie kid, expressive in his soulful looks at the board but never cute or forced.

The rest of the cast are similarly perfect: Mantegna as a competitive but loving dad, Kingsley as the wisely manipulative coach, Allen as the strong, balanced mom, and, in a showy bit, Larry "Laurence" Fishburne as the park's fast-talking chess champ. Zaillian - screenwriter of "AWAKENINGS", "JACK THE BEAR" and "SCHINDLER'S LIST" - manages to get an incredible variety into its repetitive games, and surrounds the oddly exciting action with an

unstressed, uncringe-making family story. Forget your understandable preconceptions, and give this one a try. **** ”

Radio Times reviews:

“ **"SCHINDLER'S LIST"** screenwriter Steven Zaillian made his directorial debut with this superior drama about a chess prodigy, based on a true story. Newcomer Max Pomeranc impresses as the seven-year old Josh, being groomed for chess greatness by Ben Kingsley, but drawn to the street style game of hustler Larry Fishburne, in an intelligent look at the pitfalls of thrusting a gifted child into the world of adult ambition.”

“If you're the parent of a chess fanatic, this is for you. Max Pomeranc is the chess prodigy, Joe Mantegna and Joan Allen his parents, and Ben Kingsley his reluctant coach. This is beautifully written and directed by Steven Zaillian, who scripted **"SCHINDLER'S LIST"**, which was released in the same year.”

“Ben Kingsley grooms a child chess genius.”

“Family drama about a seven-year old chess genius. *** ”

What's On TV note:

"Real-life drama starring Joe Mantegna and Max Pomeranc. A chess prodigy's parents try to develop his talents by taking him to an expert tutor. "

Sunday Times review:

“The screenwriter of **"SCHINDLER'S LIST"**, Steven Zaillian, directs this study of the chess prodigy Josh Waitzkin at seven, affectingly played by Max Pomeranc, himself a gifted player. Joe Mantegna and Joan Allen are the parents who face the inevitable conflict when their son's Bobby Fischer-like gifts are perceived; should his childhood be denied for the sake of a shelf of glittering trophies? A further schism develops between his two mentors, Laurence Fishburne, an outdoor player in Washington Square who specialises in speed chess, a game as fast as table tennis, and Ben Kingsley as Bruce Pandolfini, a teacher of classic technique. Can chess be exciting on the screen? Here it certainly is.”

“A chess prodigy suffers at the hands of his pushy parents.”

Daily Mirror note:

“Joe Mantegna discovers that his seven-year old son has a genius for chess-playing. Sharply shot story of a boy's quiet defiance in the face of contempt and cut-throat competition. *** ”

[no listing in “Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001”, “The Critics' Film Guide”, “TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995”, “Variety Movie Guide 1993” or “Video Movie Guide 1993”]

Max Pomeranc appeared the following year in **"FLUKE"**, a dog movie. That's showbiz for you.

See subject index under PRODIGIES / GIFTED CHILDREN. Would you call chess a sport? Not really, hmmm.