

## Skin Deep

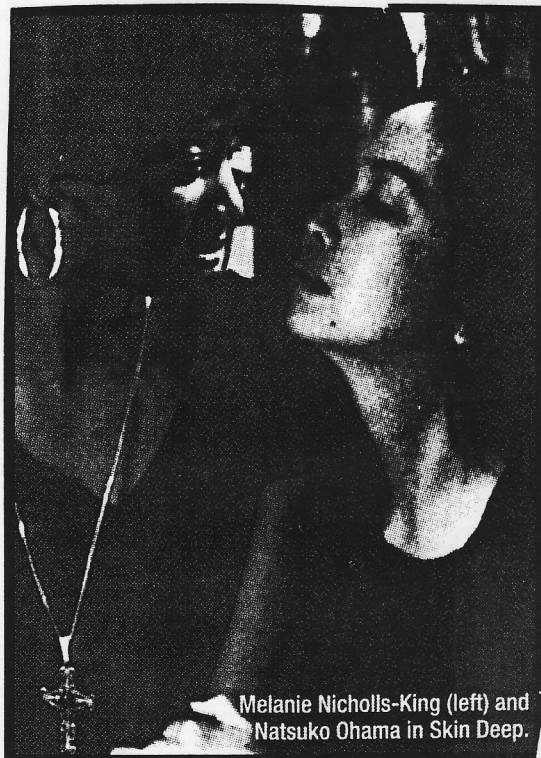
Ambitious and intriguing.

This is Midi Onodera's largely successful exploration of the mysteries of gender and sexuality.

Alex is a film director and control freak. She uses people as it suits her purposes, but refuses to accept the consequences. In bed, when it comes to de-vanilla-izing her sex life, she talks the talk, but bucks the fuck.

Researching her new film — a thriller about a tattooed killer — she finds Chris, a young man from Timmins, who rhapsodizes about the erotic power of the tattoo needle. But all is not as it seems, as layer after layer of gender and sexual identity are stripped away from Chris, Alex and Alex's friend Penny.

At the climax, Onodera succumbs to the allure of the trite, but generally her film is thoughtful and assured. She doesn't man-



Melanie Nicholls-King (left) and Natsuko Ohama in Skin Deep.

age to delve into the ultimate depths of why we are who we are sexually, but her surface treatment is better than most any other feature movie has yet bothered to try.