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| |  | | --- | |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | [Christine Corcos](http://docs.google.com/bios.htm#corcos)     |  | | --- | | **Read other reviews:**  [Internet Movie Database](http://us.imdb.com/Title?0339422)  [Readers' comments](http://docs.google.com/user_feedback.htm)  [Readers' comments](http://docs.google.com/user-feedback3.htm#comgreenwich) |     Ultimately what is indigestible about *Murder in Greenwich* is its presentation of Fuhrman as the savior the town needs to face up to its past, salvage its present and redeem its future. Even if the O.J. trial was not really "all about Mark Fuhrman", this movie certainly is. | |  | | --- | | **WHAT HAPPENED IN GREENWICH**  by Christine Alice Corcos  The latest in an unending series of docudramas ("cases ripped from today's headlines") is *Dominick Dunne Presents* *Murder in Greenwich*, a dramatization of Mark Fuhrman's (yes, THAT Mark Fuhrman's) reconstruction of the death of Martha Elizabeth Moxley on October 30, 1975. Fuhrman, who became infamous through the real life televising of the trial of O. J. Simpson, faded from sight after his conviction for perjured testimony during that trial, moved to Idaho and eventually wrote a book about the case, *Murder in Brentwood*, which became a best-seller (though not a tv movie). Re-inventing himself as a kind of private investigator-cum-true crime writer, Fuhrman (who tells us in *Murder in Greenwich* that he "never stopped being a detective") decided to re-open the decades old unsolved murder of a pretty Connecticut teenager, the neighbor of Kennedy in-laws.  *Murder in Greenwich* should have been Martha's movie. Certainly the filmmakers try to make her the center of attention, by using that hokey old method of presenting her as the narrator of her own tragedy. The actress who plays Martha is cute enough, and certainly resembles Martha, but in these scenes she seems like an older woman trying to play a coy teenager, a jarring addition and one that was certainly not needed. In addition, we are treated to swooping camera work over the crime scene and through various houses as people discuss the murder. The implication is that Martha is an angel, or an otherworldly spirit leading us to the truth about her murder. Was this a concession to the family's firmly held Catholic faith? It's possible, but it is also possible that the writers simply took this opportunity to increase the pathos of the story.  The film introduces some serious issues, mainly the miscarriage of justice so long ago. The question of whether the rich are different enough to consistently buy immunity from prosecution is an abiding one. Fuhrman's arrival on the scene with requests to interview witnesses and examine documents stirs up old antagonisms and fears, causing one police officer to remind him that the case "is still open." Some of the residents remind him that he is a convicted perjurer, a comment which he takes like a man. Our hero Fuhrman barrels through the wealthy and cloistered town of Greenwich demanding that its inhabitants search their souls for the truth about Martha's murder. At the same time, he makes loud and obvious comparisons to the deaths of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman, telling one former detective who worked the Moxley case that he "let a double murderer get away" because he lied on the stand. "I didn't want it to be about me," he asserts. His new found friend consoles him that it ended up "being about you, anyway." Ah, shucks.  Ultimately what is indigestible about *Murder in Greenwich* is its presentation of Fuhrman as the savior the town needs to face up to its past, salvage its present and redeem its future. Even if the O.J. trial was not really "all about Mark Fuhrman", this movie certainly is. Undoubtedly there was little choice; the film is, after all, based on Fuhrman's book. The very real questions about the lack of energy with which the Greenwich police investigated Martha's murder are disposed of with the assumption that the police were honest but the Skakels and their friends (including the police commissioner) ran the town in 1975 and continued to run the town until the day Mark Fuhrman arrived. Like a gunslinger of the Old West he makes his opinions known, managing to insult the very former detective whose assistance he will need later. But Mark knows how to apologize when he is in the wrong, and he manages through force of personality and rightness of cause to get the information and the interviews he needs. Mark is incredibly attractive too; he gets the come-on from an attractive but alcoholic socialite who helps him by getting him, the lower class, discredited out of towner, into contact with the wealthy and diffident villagers. Before he leaves town, he eventually takes her to task for her excessive drinking in the mornings, without accepting her obvious invitation to distract her at night. Good man, that Mark Fuhrman, and a loyal husband. Magically he overcomes all obstacles. Against all odds, he solves Martha's murder.  Fuhrman and his sidekick, a young and educated type who seems more at home in Greenwich than he does, eventually construct a plausible explanation for Martha's seeming disappearance after 9:30 on October 30 and the slippery time of her death: was it 9:50, 10:30 or later? As Fuhrman points out, and this is an important issue to keep in mind, the police who investigated the murder originally tried to determine the time of the murder from the times during which their prime suspects had an alibi. Since the Skakel boys seemed to be accounted for after 9:30 and the initial coroner's report and earwitnesses suggested Martha died before 10, the police were stumped. Rushton Skakel's willingness to allow them to search the Skakel house was another psychological red herring. The police could not believe that anyone who consented to a search might know anything about the murder (and the film does not suggest that the elder Skakel in fact did know anything).  What Fuhrman does contribute is a lesson in deduction. As he points out, barking dog evidence, which the police took to be contemporaneous with the crime, is not proof of anything. Of course, the famous barking dog in the Nicole Simpson/Ronald Goldman case set the time of those deaths (but that is another story). Instead, Fuhrman and his colleagues set out to reconstruct the murder. They have no choice. They have no formal investigative power. Much of the evidence is either secret, mishandled, or lost. The film attributes this not to sloppy police work (that would be too reminiscent of the O.J. case) but to undue influence and deliberate tampering in order to hide evidence of guilt. The legal system has failed Martha for 25 years, but Fuhrman will do her justice.  Thus does anti-hero detective Mark Fuhrman, who became a familiar face through a televised real trial dealing with a real-life double murder, reinvent himself as hero private detective Mark Fuhrman, avenger of the innocent, in this fictionalized television version. The actor who plays Fuhrman is attractive. He plays the detective with a touching macho sensitivity, leaving flowers at Martha's grave, meeting with Martha's mother to assure her that she did not hear her daughter's death agony at 9:30 that night, and looking on with quiet approval as Dorthy Moxley quietly celebrates the end of a nightmare on the steps of the courthouse.  The film seems to take at least some liberties with the story as it has evolved in the press and in court. One of the other prime suspects, Ken Littleton, the Skakel boys' tutor, becomes someone named "Morris", perhaps to defend against a potential defamation suit. The suggestion that Fuhrman single-handedly focused enough attention on the crime to re-open the investigation would come as a surprise to Timothy Dumas, a resident of Greenwich at the time of the murder, who has since written his own version, *A Wealth of Evil* (1998), well written and thoughtful, and to Dominick Dunne himself, whose fictionalization of the story appeared in his 1993 novel *A Season in Purgatory*.  In spite of the attention that the movie gives to Martha's last weeks and the speculations surrounding her death, it uses her as much as anyone else in this sordid story, except her family. It explains this sad, perverse tale of a would-be Romeo and Juliet ends as the killing of Juliet by her unknown Romeo, with the entire town closing ranks against the accusation of a murderer among them. Martha's life was not nearly as important as her killer's, says *Murder in Greenwich*. The town sacrificed her to its peace of mind. The film, and Fuhrman, may be correct in their analysis. But Fuhrman surely uses Martha to rehabilitate himself. The film presents him as the smartest, the most dogged, the most incorruptible investigator ever to hit town. But he is not the only person who seems to use Martha for his own ends.  Even Dominick Dunne, who has known the tragic loss of a daughter inserts himself into this story; the title of the movie is *Dominick Dunne Presents Murder in Greenwich*. Using a 15 year old murder victim in this way makes this film ultimately quite unpalatable, even if it were well written, well acted and well intentioned. It may be the last of these three, but it still does Martha a disservice. The movie compresses the actual trial-the vindication that we are led to believe is the purpose of the exercise-into a few minutes. After all the speculation about the absence of justice for more than two decades, we do not see how justice is finally achieved.  At the conclusion of the trial, Dorthy Moxley addresses the crush of journalists crowded around to hear her reaction to the guilty verdict. "This is Martha's day," she assures them. It should have been. Martha Moxley, who was pretty and funny and eager to enter into young adulthood, had so few days to call her own. *Murder in Greenwich* tries to give us a sense of the reasons for Martha's short stay on earth, and of the meaninglessness of her sudden and violent death. It tries as well to give us some understanding of the motivations of a lonely and troubled boy, who 27 years later was convicted of the murder. To some extent it succeeds, in spite of the trite dialogue, the false drama and the intrusive presence of media celebrities Dominick Dunne, who "presents Murder in Greenwich" according to the film's title, and Fuhrman himself. But the presence of those celebrities is just a reconfirmation of Martha's ultimate meaning to others: Dunne and Fuhrman have used her, just as the film suggests Tommy Skakel used her during that last summer of her life.  She deserves better than that. *Murder in Greenwich* is Mark Fuhrman's movie. It should have been Martha's.  Posted October 27, 2002 |   **Would you like to comment on this article? Please submit your comments** [**here.**](http://docs.google.com/submit-comments.htm) |  |  | | --- | | [Top of page](#gjdgxs) |  |  | | --- | | [Home](http://docs.google.com/index.html) | [Silver Screen](http://docs.google.com/silver_screen.htm) | [Small Screen](http://docs.google.com/smallscreen/small_screen.htm) | [News & Views](http://docs.google.com/newsnviews.htm) | | |