

Clockers: A welcome twist on a tired genre

In the past decade, Spike Lee has emerged from obscurity with films such as "Do the Right Thing," "Jungle Fever," and "Malcolm X." Of late, Lee has been better known sitting courtside in the Madison Square Arena at Knicks' games. "Crooklyn," Lee's last film, received a lukewarm response from critics, but more importantly, was a commercial bust.

Initially, "Clockers" was written with the hopes that Martin Scorsese and Robert De Niro would bite at it. Unfortunately for Universal Pictures, who paid Richard Price \$1.9 million for the screenplay adaptation of his novel, Scorsese and De Niro nixed "Clockers" for "Casino." Instead, Universal gained Lee and Harvey Keitel. And when Scorsese agreed to stay on as a producer, the future became bright for "Clockers."

Lee told Price he would only direct something he wrote. Lee subsequently changed the original screenplay, downplaying Keitel's character, Rocco, so that the picture would not be focused on a middle-aged white detective.

As with many of his films, "Clockers" possesses Spike Lee's outspoken feelings about particular races. Lee uses a variety of portrayals to prove his point. In that regard, this film can be somewhat condescending and offensive at times.

The score/soundtrack is sometimes so powerful that it draws attention away from the on-screen action, which is a no-no by anyone's standards. Regardless, it is another original element which has never existed in the 'gangsta' genre of films.

Bullet wounds in all shapes and sizes introduce us to the grim and gritty world of "Clockers." Morbid photographs of black men shot through various body parts seem to be on screen forever. My advice for the weak-hearted: come in ten minutes late.

After this powerful and disturbing introduction, Strike (Mekhi Phifer) majestically walks up to the center of his neighborhood, and we begin to see the extent of his world. Soon, Strike goes for a ride in



BY DANNY KIM

Clockers
(1995, Drama)

Cast

Mekhi Phifer
Harvey Keitel
Delroy Lindo
John Turturro

Directed by Spike Lee

(Out of a possible ten)

Cinematography: 8

Acting: 8

Character Development: 8

Musical Score & Soundtrack: 8

Overall Rating: 88%

the Thunderbird of the local dope kingpin, Rodney (Delroy Lindo). Rodney is one of the most intriguing characters in this film; he has younger guys, like Strike, to deal cocaine, but at the same time, he tries to teach kids morals. Basically, he's a paradoxical man without a clue as to how much he contradicts himself.

While Strike is in Rodney's car, Rodney tells him about a hit he must perform. The reason: the targeted individual is a bad influence in the neighborhood. Leaving the viewer to ponder the irony of the crime, the picture enters a 'who-dunnit' mode at this point.

The next scene is of a perforated corpse getting pulled off the concrete in front of Ahab's. It is then that Strike's brother, clean and upstanding Victor (Isaiah Washington), confesses that he himself did the crime. Detective Rocco Klein (Keitel) has a hard time believing that a man making such a good name for himself would murder anyone, so he frequents Strike's neighborhood in search of the truth.

The end of "Clockers" is a nice twist from the utterly predictable theme of "Boyz 'N the Hood" and "Jason's Lyric." I pray that nobody tries to mimic "Clockers," for it was timely more than anything else.



PHOTO BY PAUL "SPYDER" EVANS

A memorial service was held Monday for musician Herbie Phillips, who died Sept. 13. He provided numerous charts over the years to the UNLV Jazz Ensemble.

Memorial held for local jazz musician

UNLV faculty, staff praise trumpeter Herbie Phillips

BY TERESA HINDS
EDITOR

Gentle. Humble. Kind. Patient. Musical. Those are words that would always crop up in conversations about jazz musician Herbie Phillips, who's music has been a part of the UNLV Jazz Ensemble book for many years.

They were also words used in abundance to describe the 60-year-old Phillips Monday night at his memorial service at the Nicholas J. Horn Auditorium on the Community College of Southern Nevada campus.

Phillips, who had recently taken on the duties as jazz director at CCSN, collapsed Sept. 11 while rehearsing the jazz band, and died two days later at Lake Mead Hospital after suffering a brain aneurysm.

The memorial service was a celebration of Phillips' life and music. His compositions and arrangements were performed by a big band of constantly changing personnel, composed of the best jazz musicians from across the country. "Everybody gets to play tonight because that's the way Herbie would have wanted it," said saxophonist Charlie McLean.

McLean, who has known Phillips for nearly 40 years, served as the evening's master of ceremonies and band leader.

Following the memorial service, a jam session was held in Phillips' honor at Mel-

rose Bar and Grill, lasting until well past 4 a.m.

UNLV Vice President Ken Hanlon, who knew Phillips for more than 30 years, was one of hundreds of Phillips' friends and fellow musicians who attended the memorial service.

"I thought it was a nice service, because Herbie was a man of few words and much action," Hanlon said. "Herbie was a supreme writer, and he left behind a body of work that can be played over and over again by musicians. We may not be able to hear some of the jazz solos he played, but with his music we will constantly be reminded of what a musical talent he was."

"He was highly respected, everybody thought he was a gem of a human being. Nice is an understatement, but Herbie was truly a nice person."

Speaking of Phillips' humility, Hanlon said, "In the arts, ego is so much a part of it. Herbie's ego never got in the way. He was always gracious, he never groused because he didn't have enough of a solo or his charts weren't being used enough."

Frank Gagliardi, director of the UNLV jazz studies program, also attended the service, and described Phillips, who played the trumpet and flugelhorn, as "An ideal person. He was a beautiful, warm, selfless person."

Gagliardi has purchased numerous charts from Phillips over the past 10 years for the UNLV Jazz Ensemble to perform. "Herbie would come over and rehearse the band at the drop of the hat," Gagliardi said. "He was

Please see Phillips, pg. 8



PHOTO BY VASNA WILSON
Brett Silver

Rapper finds success through determination

BY PAULINE VILLAPANO
STAFF WRITER

"I don't care if you don't like me ... I can't see looks! But all along my vision was never lost ... I can't see looks!"

The forceful rap lyrics, penned by UNLV junior Brett Silver, echoed through the chilly air of his college dorm room.

Silver was born blind on September 21, 1975. His future was filled with questions about how he would deal with his life, but Silver's powerful determination and aspirations have made him

one of the most courageous young men on campus.

As a child, Silver had always been a devoted fan of rap music, but at the age of 13 his destiny began crystallizing.

While attending a summer camp in Malibu, California, he met blind rapper Slate Anderson. Silver was entranced by Slate's talents.

"When I heard him showing off his skills in front of fellow peers, I wanted to be able to have the talent and gain the

"Don't underestimate me 'cause I'm blind and I'm white."

—Brett Silver

respect that he did."

Although Silver had been listening to this form of music long before Slate inspired him, he began to take rap more seriously. "I did not just listen to the beats, I began studying the lyrics greatly in depth," he recalled.

Silver's ambition drove him to buy a Casio synthesizer and experiment with freestyle rap. "My lyrical skills improved, and I also began to realize that it was a terrific means of

expressing myself," said Silver.

"It gets a lot of stuff off my chest, experiences that have inspired me, things that I've seen or heard. I recall something, get angry about it, get a vibe for a beat in my mind and then just start writing on it."

Although he began rapping as a hobby, Silver was encouraged by many to explore a recording career.

"I took into consideration what they said, but I still had my doubts."

Soon his hobby became a concrete project. He was introduced to music producer Alex Sanchez, and they began

Please see Silver, pg. 8