

ENTERTAINMENT

Winfrey's 'Beloved' hauntingly powerful slave tale

By Tammy McMahan

A wide-release film that unflinchingly looks at the horror and degradation of slavery and its aftermath has been long in coming. *Beloved* is that film.

Beloved is based upon the Toni Morrison novel of the same name.

This majestic, haunting work may stay with the viewer for days and, maybe, even a lifetime, due to its superb treatment of the emotional aftermath of a past filled with suffering.

The film is the story of Sethe (Oprah Winfrey), a runaway slave who was greatly abused at the misnamed Sweet Home Plantation in Kentucky.

In her race for freedom, Sethe eventually reaches rural Ohio where she lives with her daughter, Denver (Kimberly Elise), at 124 Bluestone Road.

With that address it would seem that their home would be most ordinary. However, the house is haunted by a tortured spirit.

In fact, the film opens with



Oprah Winfrey (center) stars as Sethe, Thandie Newton (left) stars as Beloved and Kimberly Elise as Denver, in Touchstone Pictures' drama, "Beloved."

a scene befitting *The Exorcist* with the flying objects and the shakey surroundings. Into this supernatural setting enters Paul D. (Danny Glover), a friend of Sethe and a former slave on the Sweet Home Plantation.

Sethe invites him to stay with her and Denver. He is understandably frightened by

the spirit which he characterizes as some force of evil. He must also face a bitter, sullen Denver who resents Paul D's presence and symbolization of her mother's painful slave past.

Eventually, the spirit quiets and Denver warms up to Paul D. Sethe, Denver and Paul D. create a kind of

domestic bliss.

However, their bliss is short-lived with the mysterious appearance of a woman named Beloved (Thandie Newton).

Beloved is a woman-child at best. Her speech and walk are like that of an infant. Although her face shows a sweet, addled-brained

innocence, she is infinitely more complex. That complexity will wreak havoc at 124 Bluestone Road forever.

Oprah Winfrey gives a brave, deep performance as Sethe. Winfrey can manifest Sethe's indomitable spirit, one which will "never run from another thing on earth."

Winfrey aptly shows Sethe's vulnerabilities. In one incredibly powerful scene in which Oprah's voice weakens each time she says, "they took my milk," the viewer knows that Sethe's memories are so horrific that her mind warily approaches them.

Kimberly Elise deserves an Oscar nomination for her performance as the emotionally battered Denver. Elise beautifully portrays a grown child who must fight her mother's demons.

Elise's talents shine by way of mere looks and choice words of anger, resentment, madness and hope. Ultimately, Elise's Denver is a survivor who is bruised, but not fatally wounded.

Danny Glover and Beah Richards (Baby Suggs) give the film the love, warmth and forgiveness that are needed in the midst of the devastating sadness.

The love scenes between Glover and Winfrey are poignant. Glover is convincing as a much needed source of love when he passionately kisses Sethe's back scars left by a horrible lashing at the hands of a sadistic master.

Richards' scenes as a woodland preacher are incredibly moving.

Richards' electric screen presence as she cries out for thankfulness to be a human being, not human property, may well bring tears.

Thandie Newton's performance as Beloved is something wholly unique. She is innocence. She is horror.

Newton has brought an extremely complex character from a complex novel to life.

Beloved is an achievement in film making that draws one deeply into its sadness, love, pain and mystery.



Oprah Winfrey stars as Sethe, an iron-willed former slave who must come to terms with her horric past and newly earned freedom, in Touchstone Pictures' drama, "Beloved."

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SUNDAY	OCT. 25th	Charlie Tuna's Blues Band	10pm-2am
MONDAY	OCT. 26th	Al Ek & The All-Star Jammin' Session	
TUESDAY	OCT. 27th	Moody Scott Band & 1st Class	10pm-2am
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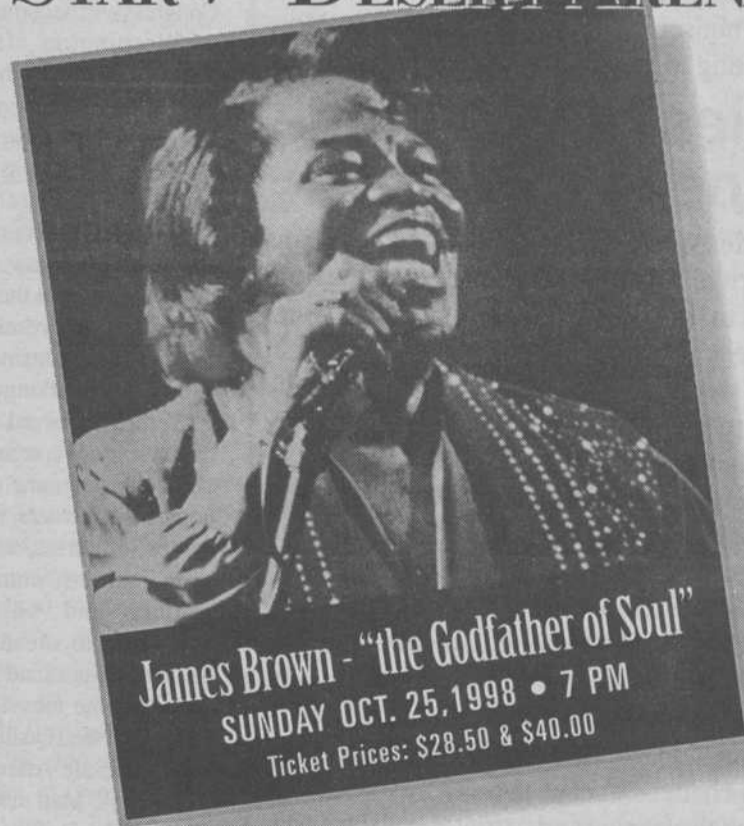
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