

ENTERTAINMENT

Prince of Egypt: A triumph of artistry, storytelling

By Tammy D. McMahan
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The visually spectacular animation and compelling story of *The Prince of Egypt* is a year end gift.

The film opens with an impressive view of ancient Egypt complete with massive pyramids, gargantuan statues of pharaohs and a vast Sphinx. The monuments were not built in the spirit of human kindness, instead they were built upon the lashed backs of enslaved peoples including the Hebrews.

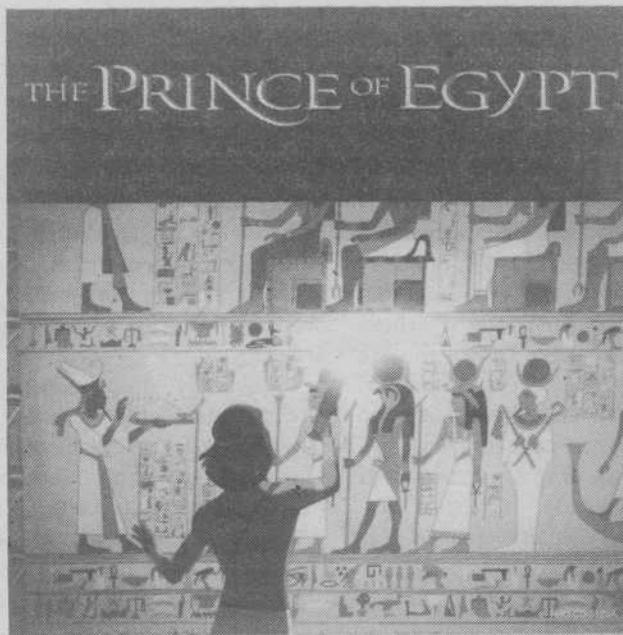
The Hebrews are cruelly oppressed by their enslaver Pharaoh Seti (Patrick Stewart) who has also commanded the death of Hebrew infants because he fears Hebrew overpopulation. However, a young Hebrew woman, Yocheved (Ofra Haza), is determined that her newborn

son will live. To that aim, she tearfully sets him afloat in a basket upon the Nile river as the infant's sister Miriam (Sandra Bullock) and brother Aaron (Jeff Goldblum) watch. One of the film's most touching, haunting songs, "Deliver Us", accompanies the baby's progress down the Nile.

In a well-executed, tense scene the unknowing infant takes a frightful journey down the tumultuous Nile, navigating rapid water, crocodiles, hippopotami and the mighty oars of an Egyptian ship.

He eventually comes to rest at Pharaoh's palace where he is rescued by Pharaoh's Queen (Helen Mirren) who adopts the child and names him Moses.

The story then shifts to an adult Moses (Val Kilmer) who, at this time in his life, is



a cross between Tom Cruise and Keanu Reeves. Moses is chariot racing a la Ben Hur with his adopted brother Rameses (Ralph Fiennes). The hijinks of the brothers is animated in an ingenious manner; that is, their physical

display of sibling rivalry is wreaking havoc on revered Egyptian architecture.

Moses' life of privilege and pranks is forever changed when he accidentally encounters Miriam and Aaron.

Sandra Bullock enlivens Miriam with warmth and determination. Over the protestations of Aaron, Miriam tells Moses that he is their brother. The character's reaction is convincingly human.

The filmmakers aptly portray Moses' pain in a brilliant, visually striking scene in which Moses dreams that the figures carved on the palace walls reenact the killing of Hebrew infants at the hands of his adoptive father and his birth mother's actions to save him. A distraught Moses leaves Egypt for a self-imposed exile in the desert. Here, he encounters a feisty Midianite woman (Michelle Pfeiffer) who he eventually marries with the blessing of her father, Jethro (Danny Glover).

Moses lives a most ordinary shepherd's life until God "appears" in a burning bush. In a film filled with visually spectacular images, this beautiful, mysterious play of light, sound and computer magic ably evokes the image of a supreme being.

Moses is dispatched by God to Egypt to convince Pharaoh Rameses, his adopted brother, to let his people go.

As those familiar with the Exodus story know, Pharaoh's heart was as hard as the stones of the monuments. Thus, God utilized his servant Moses to send plagues upon the land to force the release of the Hebrews.

The plagues are excellently rendered, conjuring up both feelings of dread and recognition of the supreme power behind the plagues.

The final plague which results in the death of the first-born sons of Egypt is particularly chilling and emotionally powerful. Near the end of the film, the parting of the Red Sea is shown and it is one of the most incredible achievements of animation. The spectacular scope and detail of this scene will be talked about for years.

Unquestionably, *The Prince of Egypt* is one of the most impressive films of 1998.

Hill educating public on her numerous talents

NEW YORK (AP) — Lauryn Hill is proud to be redefining hip-hop and R&B.

Hill, a member of the Fugees, broke out in 1998 with her top-selling solo album "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill," which crossed numerous bridges by blending soul, rap, spirituals and dance hall sounds.

"I was thinking hip-hop and R&B as we know them aren't as personal and



LAURYN HILL

intimate as the music I want to make — a lot of it is very braggadocious and cool," Hill says in the January issue of Spin. "I was nervous that people weren't going to be able to relate, or would think I'm a martian."

"To know that people have responded in such a way makes me realize that they're actually very ready for truth and real experiences."

Hill, 23, was named Spin

magazine's Artist of the Year.

Interviewed while awaiting the birth of her second child while her first toddled around the kitchen, Hill said many in the music business told her having children was a bad career move.

She was glad to prove them wrong, but says becoming a mother is a personal joy, not an image overhaul.

Movie recounts young girls' roles in civil rights struggle

In 1965, 8-year-old Sheyann Webb and 9-year-old Rachel West joined the civil rights movement.

Though years away from voting, the young duo traveled to Selma, Ala., to help organize protests against Jim Crow voting laws.

Told once through a book based on journalist Frank Sikora's interviews with the young girls during the 1970s, their story will come to television next week.

ABC will air *Selma, Lord, Selma: Girlhood Memories of the Civil-Rights Days*, on Jan. 17, the Sunday before Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Webb, now Webb-Christburg, was on the Edmund Pettus Bridge on "Bloody Sunday," the day when authorities let loose tear gas and beat peaceful marchers with clubs. Both girls marched from Selma to

Montgomery with King two weeks later.

Webb-Christburg and Nelson, now in their forties,

acted as extras in the Disney movie's recreation of the bloody confrontation. King's daughter, Yolanda King, also

appears in the film. Sikora's book was first published in 1980 by the University of Alabama Press.

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