

# 'Three Kings' blessed with royal plot, acting

Tammy McMahan  
Sentinel-Voice

The film "Three Kings" begins with a young American soldier asking his fellow soldiers: "Are we still killing people?"

The soldier, Staff Sgt. Troy Barlow (Mark Wahlberg), wants to make sure it's okay to pop a gun-toting Iraqi soldier who is waving a white cloth.

Barlow's compatriots don't care; U.S. military involvement in the Persian Gulf War is over.

Barlow shrugs his shoulders and shoots the hapless Iraqi in the neck, killing him. The scene quickly shifts to American soldiers in joyous and reckless celebration of the War's end despite the ambiguous fate of Iraqi rebels left to fight Saddam Hussein on their own.

The stage is set for the thoughtful, inventive and gritty war film "Three Kings." It's the story of four American soldiers (George Clooney, Mark Wahlberg, Ice Cube and Spike Jonze) who team up to find and steal a cache

of Kuwaiti gold bullion hidden away in one of Saddam Hussein's many bunkers.

The four men think the run should be as quick and painless as the Desert Storm campaign.

Their plan, however, goes awry in a matter of minutes when Clooney's character Captain Archie Gates decides to stop the murder of an Iraqi rebel at the hands of a member of Hussein's Republican guard.

Subsequently, the four soldiers embark on a spiritual journey that forever changes their notions of compassion, duty and honor.

Director and co-screenwriter David Russell has created an infinitely rich film about the complexities of war - American style.

In the opening scene and some other select scenes, Russell ably shows the surreal happy-go-lucky attitude of American soldiers amidst death and devastation. Russell's take of this disturbing insensitivity is as compelling as the "Ugly American Soldier" attitude shown

by Stanley Kubrick in the film Full Metal Jacket.

Furthermore, despite the casting of celebrities who have yet to achieve the moniker of "serious actors" and the frequent use of pop culture references, "Three Kings" isn't a late 90's version of Rambo, nor is it an MTV war film.

Russell finely crafted and actors Clooney, Wahlberg, Ice Cube and Jonze ably portrayed the four American soldiers. The soldiers are sinners and saints.

They're not emotionless, invincible superhumans like John Rambo. Instead, they bleed mentally and physically as they grapple with fear, prejudices and duties. The other characters in this film aren't reduced to one-dimensional victims and villains.

Some of the Iraqi rebels are wonderfully fleshed out, revealing their complex humanity. The film shows a people who are, at times, frightened, defiant, humorous, clever, indignant, spiritual and brave.

The Iraqi Republican guard isn't portrayed as completely heartless villains. They're men who are forced to fight - or die. Like the rebels and the American soldiers, they want to live and they want to protect their families. The many filmmakers who don't take the time to develop support characters could learn much from Russell.

The bleached-out cinematography and honest treatment of war violence make the film even more engrossing. The cinematography immerses the audience in the midst of a gritty, hot desert.

There's an honest "you are there" feel about this work. Russell's scenes of violence are some of the most powerful anti-war statements made in 1990's cinema.

He shows the carnage, in all its ugliness, that even one metal fragment can inflict upon a human body.

"Three Kings" is likely to rank among this year's best films. This study of heroism in the midst of war is well worth seeing.

## Statewide commission: Hollywood lacking in diversity

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A new statewide commission charged with promoting tolerance and understanding of diversity has selected television as its first target.

Television's new prime-time fall lineup — which has been criticized for its lack of ethnic faces — shows Hollywood moguls are out of touch with the multicultural reality, panelists told the Commission for One California.

"It's pure racism to me," said Anne-Marie Johnson, a black actress whose credits include the 1997 miniseries "Asteroid."

The commission, composed of religious and civic leaders, civil rights lawyers, university officials and others, held its first meeting nearly two weeks ago.

Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante said the entertainment industry was the first subject chosen because it is a "hot topic," but diversity in schools, housing and other issues also will be

addressed.

During the meeting at the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Museum of Tolerance, a panel of activists and industry insiders said none of the more than two dozen new fall shows has a minority in a leading role.

"We are close to having an all-white landscape on these new fall shows," said Greg Braxton, a TV industry reporter with *The Los Angeles Times*.

Panelists cited 1998 studies that found minorities, especially Hispanics, were underrepresented on prime-time TV and in movies.

Children want multiethnic shows and the lack of ethnic actors and role models "affects the aspiration of the kids who are invisible," said Lois Salisbury, president of the advocacy group Children Now.

Panelists suggested several reasons for the under

representation of minorities, such as: Hollywood jobs depend on "who you know," and minorities don't know the right people; executives are afraid of using minorities for fear of being criticized for inaccurately portraying their cultures; and executives don't realize there is a vast English-speaking Hispanic market.

Richard Masur, president of the Screen Actors Guild, said media mergers and buyouts are eliminating diverse voices, concentrating power in "too few hands and too few minds."

The only network or studio that accepted an offer to appear at the commission meeting was the WB.

Rick Mater, the WB's senior vice president of broadcast standards, said progress has been made in diversity, noting that more than 30 gay characters appear in prime-time network shows.

"There are success stories," he said.

## Cole's Staples Center performance to benefit charity

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Grammy-winning singer Natalie Cole will perform at the opening gala of the Los Angeles Staples Center.

The Oct. 16 event will be held on the new basketball court where the National Basketball Association's Los Angeles Lakers and Clippers

will play. Proceeds from the event will go to charity.

The daughter of the legendary Nat "King" Cole recently released her first album in three years, "Snowfall on the Sahara," and has such hits as "Unforgettable" and "This Will Be."

### THE HUNGRY ONE

## Hungry diner returns to taste

Special to Sentinel-Voice

With all the new restaurants in Las Vegas, the Hungry One decided it was time to eat out and about.

Paris Las Vegas is intriguing with eight French-inspired restaurants, plus BET's Tres Jazz.

The Hungry One wondered if there really is a restaurant that could make a person feel like they were in Paris or even in France. Or even anywhere outside of Las Vegas for that matter?

The Hungry One wanted to try Le Village Champagne Buffet for Sunday Brunch. There was a forty minute wait and the price was \$21.95.

The Hungry One was hungry and didn't want to wait, so down the road a bit, La Rotisserie des Artistes was open for brunch and was only \$15.95 for a choice of appetizer, entrée and dessert. Drinks were not included.

In France, the entrée is the first course, which comes before the main course. We Americans have changed the terminology to call the main course the entrée. The lentil and split pea soup topped with Fougasse croutons was excellent. The assorted pates were very good and very French. The desserts were so-so. The rotisserie offers a choice of salmon, prime rib or chicken. They were all tasty and cooked to order. The bread with its french butter was delicious. Lunch was a bargain, and the Hungry One highly recommends La Rotisserie des Artistes.

Warning! Dinner could cost twice as much. Reservations are recommended.

La Rotisserie, 3755 Las Vegas Blvd S., can be reached at 948-4663.

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