

Dizzying special effects overshadow Disney plotline

Kam Williams
Special to Sentinel-Voice
Let's get one thing out of the way: Disney's *Dinosaur* is a cinematic marvel.

Relying on an imperceptible blend of live-action enhanced by computer-animated characters and sophis-

ticated special effects, the ambitious production delivers a visually powerful examination of the events leading to the extinction of the giant reptiles which roamed the earth millions of years ago.

The movie heralds the first

foray into feature films by Ralph Zondag and Eric Leighton. Mr. Zondag's career in animation has included contributions as a story artist (*Pocahontas*) and as an animator (*An American Tail*).

But his work in 1993 with Steven Spielberg on "We're

Back: A Dinosaur's Story" may have best prepared him for this project.

Academy Award-nominee Leighton (visual effects, *The Nightmare Before Christmas*) has been making "stop-motion" cartoons since the age of ten. In the interim, he served as an animator of TV's *Gumby* before supervising over 30 Pillsbury Doughboy commercials. Leighton, therefore, was tapped for *Dinosaur* specifically due to his reputation in the industry as a top "stop-motion animation" expert.

The movie features the voice talent of venerable Ossie Davis (*Do the Right Thing*), the divine Della Reese (of TV's *Touched By an Angel*), gentle Julianna Margulies (retiring Nurse Hathaway on TV's *ER*) and Oscar-nominee Alfre Woodard (for *Cross Creek*), also a triple Emmy-winner (for TV's *LA Law*, *Hill Street Blues* and the mini-series *Miss Evers' Boys*).

Other voices are supplied by Tony-winner Joan Plowright (*A Taste of Honey*), Peter Siragusa (*Dunston Checks In*), DB Sweeney (*Roommates*), Samuel

Wright (Sebastian in *The Little Mermaid*), Max Casella (Vinnie on TV's *Doogie Howser*) and child-star Hayden Panettiere (*Message in a Bottle*) who at 10 years of age is already a veteran of over 50 commercials, soap operas, television series and major motion pictures.

These colorful, creative artists, unfortunately, are crippled by typically dumb Disney dialogue which only mars an otherwise magnificent experience.

Disney has the infuriating knack for trading in stereotypes, so we have nobility associated with Anglo-Saxon accents while the obviously African-American alternate between cowardly and deferential.

For example, in one scene evocative of Hattie McDaniel's Oscar-winning performance as Mammy in *Gone With the Wind*, Eema the lemur (Della Reese) sassily announces, "Move over everybody, bringing in babies is what I do best."

Another crime is Disney's reducing every storyline to that formula romance which keeps a puppy-eyed pair apart and pining until the closing

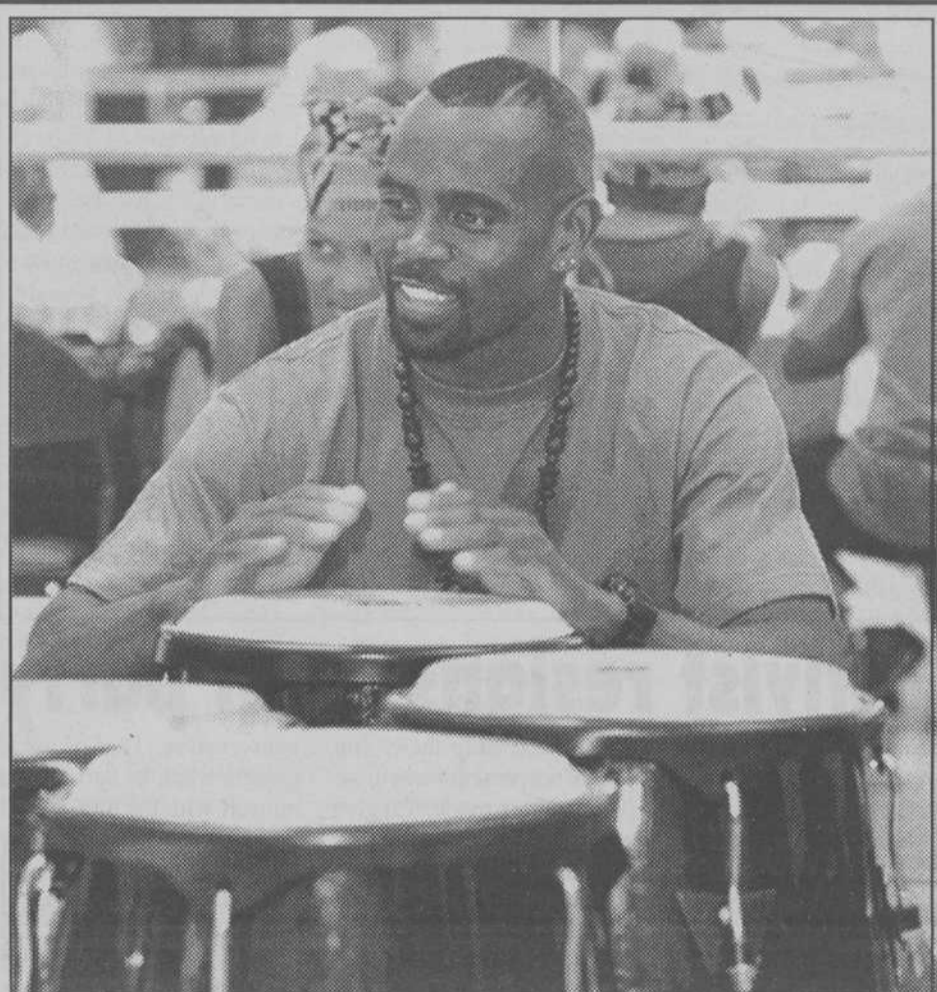
credits. But, for parents of youngsters, the biggest problem will be the fair amount of death in the film, which might not be handled easily by the under eight crowd.

Yet, the PG-rated flick is obviously intended for that set of tiny tykes so enamored of and so expert at identifying the diverse array of prehistoric creatures.

Therefore, the real stars of *Dinosaur*, are the painstakingly recreated Raptors, Lemurs, Carnotaurs, Iguanodons, Microceratops, Pteranodons, Pachyrhinosaurus, Ankylosaurus and other ancient species.

My suggestion? Earplugs to eliminate the silly front-story onscreen while simultaneously minimizing the screaming babies in the audience. Thus afforded peace and quiet, one might relish the engrossing back-story, the sad but plausible explanation for the spectacle of the sudden passing of many magnificent creatures from this planet's surface.

Very good (3 stars).
Rated PG (but deserves PG-8) for the demise of many a cuddly creature.



Ulysses Palrose's interest in the drums was piqued by an African dance teacher.
Sentinel-Voice photo by John Broussard

Drums

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bay) drum, which is famous for its unique ability and style to produce a wide range of tones.

The Djembe is also Africa's most popular drum.

Palrose credits African dance teacher Abayome Goodall for peaking his interest in the African drum, as it was she who several years ago asked him to join a group of drummers which would play during her dance performances.

Palrose also credits Ellis Rice of the West Las Vegas Arts Center for conceiving the idea for the drum classes which came about in an attempt to promote cultural activities at the center.

"I have to admit, though, I was nervous about doing this because first of all, I'm self taught in the drums," Palrose said. "I didn't feel I knew enough to impart any knowledge to people as far as the drums are concerned. But as we started with the classes, I found that all of the extensive study I've done on my own, has been pretty valuable."

Continuing to grow as a drummer himself, Palrose says he makes frequent trips to Los Angeles, getting with other drummers there to learn more of what they've got to teach so that he can then pass that information on to his students here.

"It's just the feeling... it takes you away," said student Espy Somers of drumming and the classes. "It's like meditation, and just

the things you can do with it — the sounds... it's just so magical."

Somers, who is also part of another small group that studies drumming, added that she intends to continue studying under Palrose during the next eight-week session in hopes of continuing to improve her skills.

"Ulysses has taught us a lot about how the drum works," she said. "How to tighten the drum... just more of the dynamics of the drum. I just hope to get better at what I'm doing."

Somers states, though, that just as important as technique, stamina is also key.

"Mentally and physically it's very challenging," she said. "Keeping the same beat at the same pace over a period of time while staying relaxed is very hard. I feel all that comes with time."

"Ulysses has taught me how to play the drums, how to place my hands on the drums and how to play different beats," said nine-year-old Karra Brown, who has been playing the drums since the age of three. "I just hope to one day play like Ulysses."

"I just hope they get an appreciation for the drums," said Palrose. "After eight weeks of drumming, you're obviously not going to be a Djembe master, but you can at least get an appreciation for the drum and understand that there's more to drumming than simply beating on your instrument."

"I always tell my students, 'If you beat on the instrument, it will beat you back... and win.'"

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