

ENTERTAINMENT

'Swordfish' sensational flick in 'Matrix' vein

By Kam Williams

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Sometimes, when a movie finishes, you feel almost cheated because it leaves you with too many loose ends unresolved. Such is the situation with the decidedly unsatisfying *Swordfish*, an overcharged, pretentious indulgence of the sensational at the expense of plot. This is no surprise because its director, Dominic Sena is better known for making music videos and television commercials than movies.

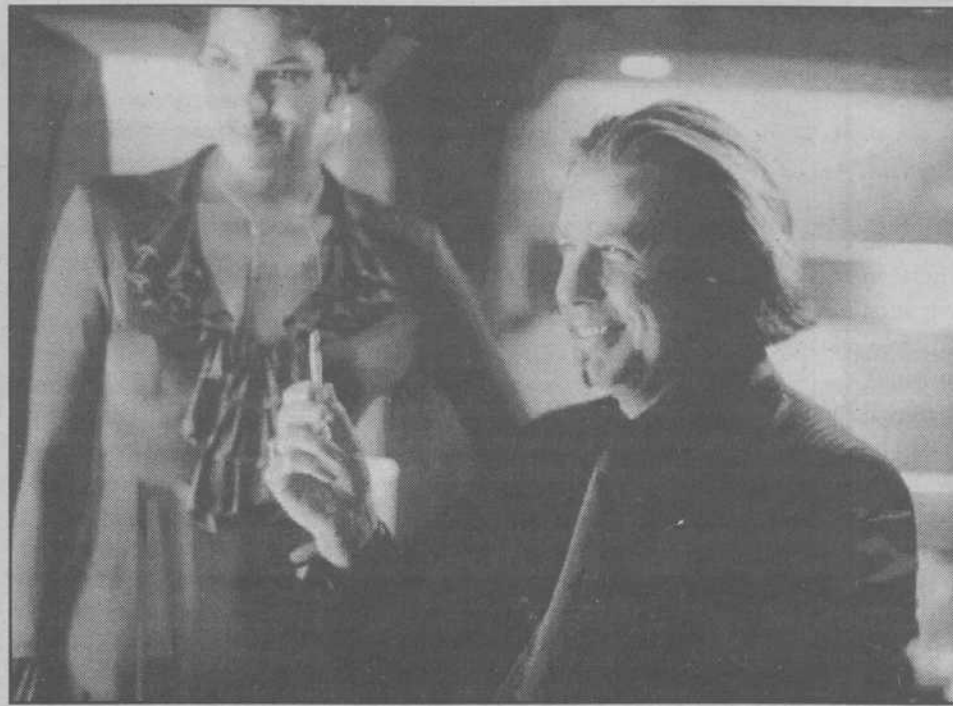
Sena who has directed videos of such pop icons as Tina Turner, David Bowie and Fleetwood Mac, earned a Grammy for Janet Jackson's 'Rhythm Nation 1814.'

Meanwhile, he has also earned awards for his TV ads for Nike, Apple and IBM.

But a full-length feature film must be more complex to hold an audience's attention for two hours.

Swordfish, produced by Joel Silver (The Matrix), relies on that Matrix-inspired slowmo/stop/speed up action device to give itself a futuristic feel. Despite the incessant pyrotechnics, explosions, car chases, gunplay, sexplay and gore, it is not enough to employ only these admittedly eye-popping, filmic contrivances. How about the rudiments of a story? Just when you're convinced the director must realize how ridiculous all this ungrounded, gratuitous sex and violence must look, he doles out some more. I don't know, it must be getting harder to shock people.

At some point, everybody still needs a



Halle Berry and John Travolta star in "Swordfish," a highly provocative, action-laden thriller produced by Joel Silver, director of the immensely successful "Matrix."

protagonist to root for, a plotline to follow and a payoff to feel good about. Sadly, *Swordfish* offers none of the above. The movie does have John Travolta in a lead role as Gabriel, a morally-ambiguous spy eager to engage in bullet-defying duels with anyone who gets in his way. Where he's headed, we have no idea.

And then there's Halle Berry, as Ginger, Gabe's sexy assistant with weed-wacker hair. Ginger's job is to coax computer hacker

Stanley (Hugh Jackman) out of his pants and out of retirement. Stanley, a crooked, cyber-technology specialist, however, has been scared straight after having been caught hacking his way into the FBI's surveillance operations. But Ginger offers him a reason, in fact, a couple of beautiful reasons to reconsider, and when push comes to grope, Stanley's in.

This is way off the subject, but all the hoopla around this film has had to do with

Berry's bosom, bared for the first time here, proving you can use any angle to promote a movie. She can put her eye-poppers back in a bra now.

But I also suppose it means that if nobody goes to see *Swordfish*, she'll have taken her top off for nothing.

Unassuming character Don Cheadle, who has delivered a string of solid, if unspectacular, performances in *Traffic*, *Family Man*, *Mission to Mars*, *Boogie Nights*, *Bulworth*, and so forth, delivers afresh as Agent Roberts, head of the Fed team trying to crack the case. But your guess is as good as mine what the case is all about.

As Gabe, Travolta adopts an insufferably arrogant air, ordering women to satisfy men in order to bend them to his will. When that doesn't work, automatic weapons or plastic explosives will do. Sex-linked violence is another favorite as well, such as when a gun is held to Stanley's head while a woman pleases him orally. Stan's the man, able to ignore both distractions to break a computer code in less than a minute. Cool, calm and felled.

Nothing makes sense from start to finish. In the end, Gabe attempts to rationalize his rampage with some pointless pedagogy. Enough, quit it!

Poor (1 star). Rated R (for Halle Berry's breasts, exploding women, harsh profanities, gratuitous sex, senseless gore, a high body count, countless car crashes and assorted pyrotechnics).

Juneteenth

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The pilot program for AAAS will start in January 2002 in Las Vegas' Ward 5, City Councilman Lawrence Weekly's district. The location has not yet been disclosed.

"The principal of the designated school will select 10 to 15 students to participate in the program with parent participation, therefore, the program will be successful and the students will be academically driven," says Hughes, who feels that each parent should be well aware of their child's responsibility. "The pilot will start with elementary students and venture to adult classes. Although the program's focus will be African-American studies, the school will be for a diverse community," Hughes explained.

Congresswoman Shelley Berkley (D-Nev.) presented a Certificate of Congressional Recognition commending the committee for creating the Las Vegas Juneteenth Festival. "I think we should use this occasion, commemorating a significant date in the history of this nation and the African-American community...as an opportunity to talk about empower-



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Teddy Davis, Jr. serenades Tiffany Evans during Juneteenth.

ment, education and achievement for all people," said Berkley.

Galaxy Glenn, of KCEP-FM, "Power 88," emceed the event, introducing local talent and announcing the winners of prizes provided by sponsors and supporters. "I'm having a wonderful time out here and it's great to see a diverse crowd of different generations, young and old, celebrating freedom," said Glenn.

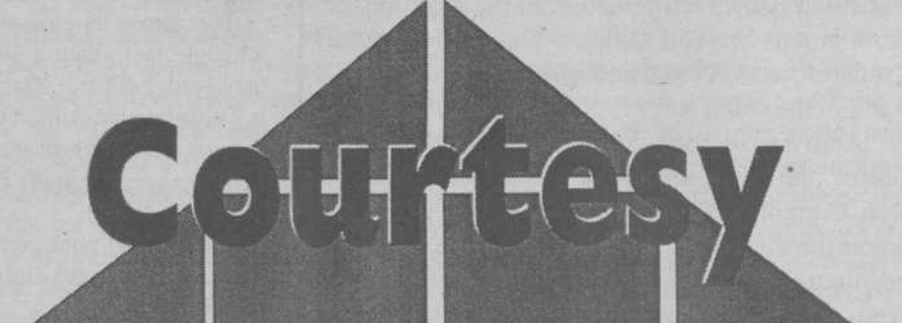
The entertainment included a spiritual dance by the Performance Dance Ensemble, and performances by the Special EFX Dance Group, The Willie Jaye Band-

which is currently playing at the House of Blues- and many other local talents.

All proceeds from the event, which are more than \$15,000, go directly to the AAAS.

"With all the help and support from the committee, community at large, from the media to the newspapers, I am so overwhelmed with all of the warm wishes and support, it just gives me motivation," said Hughes.

"Yes, it will be a yearly event (and) has already been scheduled for next year," she said. "We also look forward to adding a parade to the celebration."



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