

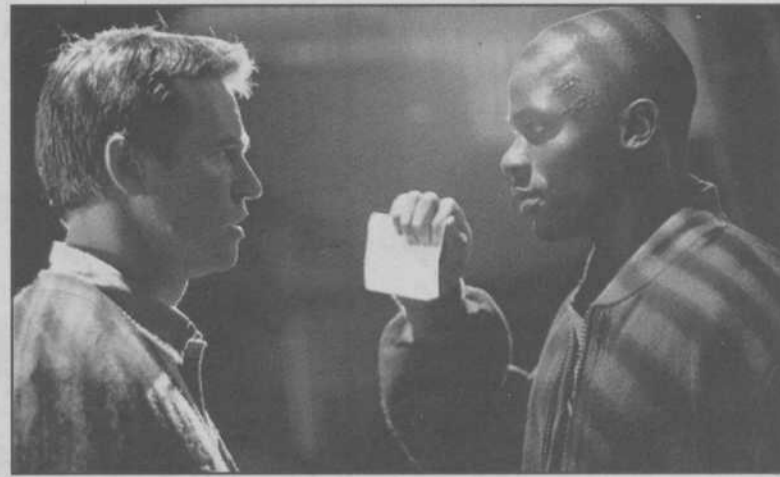
Mamet delivers layered political potboiler in 'Spartan'

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright David Mamet (Glengarry Glen Ross) made the jump from theater to filmmaking in 1987 with "House of Games," a labyrinthine whodunit about a confederacy of con artists who stage an elaborate scam to steal money.

Since that brilliant directorial debut, Mamet has written a number of other multi-layered mysteries for the big screen, most notably, the relatively lighthearted "Wag the Dog" (1997) for which he received an Academy Award nomination. In "Wag the Dog," a U.S. President, worried about re-election, decides to manufacture a bigger

bombshell in order to keep an underage girl's allegation of sexual harassment against him out of the headlines. So, he declares war on Albania, but rather than actually invade the tiny country, he enlists the assistance of a Hollywood producer to stage the skirmish on a set, while further manipulating the media and the masses with plenty of



"Antoine Fisher" alum Derek Luke, right, leads a solid cast in "Spartan," which resurrects the theme of international intrigue director David Mamet used in 1997's "Wag the Dog."

patriotic propaganda. "Spartan," though serious in tone, resurrects a theme similar to that of "Wag the Dog." In this instance, the President's college-age daughter, Laura (Kristin Bell), has disappeared in Boston. It falls to Special Operations Agents Scott (Val Kilmer) and Curtis (Derek Luke) to mount a secret search and rescue mission. Though Scott is a wily, seasoned veteran, while Robert is a wide-eyed novice, neither is really equipped to unravel a conspiracy of the magnitude they encounter.

For the pair's investigation becomes frustrated on two fronts. First, they learn that Laura was kidnapped and

already shipped out of the country to Yemen by Arabs dealing in White slavery. Secondly, before they can even fly to Dubai to attempt a clandestine rescue, the media issues an announcement that her dead body has been found. So, it seems that someone wants the world to think the First Daughter is dead.

Just who is behind this phony announcement, and why, lies at the heart of "Spartan," a riveting, political potboiler. And it becomes increasingly difficult for our protagonists to discern why someone in the chain of command doesn't want them to crack the case. Thus, the more the evidence leads to the highest levels of government, the

more dangerous it becomes for anyone intent on saving the girl and exposing the source of the misinformation.

Career performances coaxed out of both Kilmer and Luke, with an excellent supporting cast headed by Oscar-nominee William H. Macy (Fargo), Ed O'Neill (Married with Children) and singer-turned-actress Tia Texada (Glitter). This could be called vintage Mamet, replete with his trademark, staccato repartee and an intricate, ever-unfolding web of intrigue which will keep your head spinning to the bitter end.

Excellent (3.5 stars), Rated R for bloody violence and profanity.

Chubby Checker stages protest

NEW YORK (AP) - Chubby Checker, whose song "The Twist" was one of the most popular dance records of all time, isn't in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. And that's OK with him.

But the singer is peeved over what he considers a lack of radio airplay for the classic song and his new material. So he staged a protest - albeit good-natured - outside Monday's induction festivities in midtown Manhattan.

"I'm not doing it to get into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame at all," he told The Associated Press in an interview. "I don't get the airplay that one in my position deserves. 'Twist and Shout' gets more airplay than 'The Twist,' and that's not right."

Checker, 62, has been recording for decades, other hits include "The Hucklebuck" and "Pony Time." But his biggest hit was the 1960 song "The Twist," which went to No. 1 in that year and again in 1962, sparking a dance craze across the nation. The song was so popular he even had a hit with its sequel, "Let's Twist Again," in 1961. (He also had a hit with "Slow Twistin'" and in 1994 released a song called "Texas Twist").

While the writer of the "The Twist," Hank Ballard, has been inducted into hall, Checker hasn't.

Seymour Stein, presi-



Rock and roll legend Chubby Checker talks to a member of the press Monday outside the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York to tell the public not to forget his music.

dent of the Rock Hall's New York chapter and member of the committee that helps select inductees, told the AP: "I think that Chubby is someone who will be considered. He has in certain years."

However, Checker doesn't think it's necessary that he's inducted.

"It doesn't matter at all," he said. "They have 'The Twist' there already. They don't need two in there."

But he does want a photo of himself to welcome people into the Rock Hall's museum in Cleveland, a request the Hall of Fame has not obliged.

"Who's more fitting to do that than me?" he asks.

And he's salty over what he perceives as a lack of respect at radio. He complains that "The Twist" doesn't get the airplay it deserves on oldies stations, and that radio is ignoring his new material, even though his latest song, "Limbo Rock Remixes," has risen to No. 16 on Billboard's

Hot Dance Singles Sales chart.

"Here's an old eagle laying new eggs, and I thought that radio would be ecstatic," he said. "But they're not."

"I'm not getting the airplay - no airplay, no pay-day," said Checker, who waxes on and on about the popularity of "The Twist. He says even foods with the words "twist" and "checker" in them point to the song's enduring popularity. (He also markets "Chubby Checker's Beef Jerky" with flavors like "Sugar Twist Teriyaki.")

Checker hopes that will change with his one-man protest outside the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, where the induction dinner was scheduled for Monday evening.

"I'm really appearing on the street for musical recognition," Checker said.

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wealth of a community connects tightly with educational opportunities. Better schools are in wealthier communities and substandard ones concentrated in poor and minority communities. The shameful part is that the ticket to a great school comes from buying a house that is affordable to a very few. I talked to lots of hard-working families who felt that their options were limited because they could not afford to move to districts with higher quality schools."

In the end, Shapiro does offer some answers, though they might sound radical in these days when the culture pays homage to the entitled rich and their spoiled-rotten progeny in reality show after reality show - ala "The Osbournes," Donald Trump, Paris Hilton, Nicole Richie and Anna Nicole Smith. His simple solutions involve awarding achievement and merit, rather than birth, which are straightforward enough, provided society is inclined to dismantle entrenched forms of institutionalized racism.

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