

# 'Catwoman' fails to claw meaning from tepid plot

By Kam Williams  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

"It all started on the day that I died" is the ominous first line in this laughable film, which comes dead on arrival.

Catwoman's initial failing is that it is narrated by a bored Halle Berry who doesn't even sound like she believes a word of what she's saying during that opening montage. That's, a big no-no, because if a movie's star won't bother to pretend, how can you expect the audience to buy into the fantasy?

I blame Pitof for this disaster. Who is Pitof? He is the film's director. Pitof is a Frenchman, so famous in his native country as a special effects editor that he goes by only one name. The problem is that France isn't known for state-of-the-art f/x. Pitof obviously doesn't understand English very well.

As a result, he was unable to discern any of the subtle nuances, which separate good from bad performances. And Catwoman's stale action sequences look a few generations old and rather lame, especially if you've seen any installments of the Spiderman, X-Men or Matrix franchises.

Catwoman's saving grace is that it features Ms. Berry's body, whether bending over in her bust-baring outfit, squeezing her buttocks or breasts through bars during a jailbreak, or simply strutting her stuff as if a runway model up on a catwalk. Halle's make-up, however, leaves a lot to be desired, because somebody decided to give her thick, Groucho Marx eyebrows under her super-hero mask.

The film co-stars Benjamin Bratt, who is best known for having dated Julia Roberts and Sharon Stone,



While the top role in "Catwoman" may have liberated Halle Berry in real life, it added little to her cinematic resume.

who remains best-remembered for crossing and uncrossing her legs sans panties in "Basic Instinct." The only other character worthy of note is Sally (Alex Borstein), who steals every scene while over-acting as that stereotypical, obnoxious, chubby best friend who's always sassy, horny and boy crazy.

At our point of departure, Halle is homely Patience Phillips, shy, sensitive graphic designer dressed in sackcloth and employed by Hedare Beauty Inc. The cosmetic conglomerate is deliberately about to unleash a new line of anti-aging products that it knows to be harmful. When Patience, perchance, discovers this plot, the "Plain Jane" is pushed into a vat of goo, dies, and is transformed into a curvaceous super-vixen

sporting fire engine-red lipstick.

With her former boss (Stone) now her archenemy, a revived Patience finally has a reason for being, plus she develops the confidence to seduce an empty-headed lunkhead like patrolman Tom Lone (Bratt). Her love interest, of course, has a hard time figuring out that his girlfriend also happens to be Catwoman, even though she leaves claw marks on his back after a night of passion. A pointless, passionless, poorly scripted picture. Not at all adult-oriented entertainment. At best a turn-on for pre-pubescent boys or a female empowerment flick for pre-menstrual little girls.

Poor (0 stars). Rated PG-13 for cartoonish violence and incessant titillation.

## Vote

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and helps those people to get out and vote," said David Bositis, senior political analyst for the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

The ongoing war, worries about the economy and terrorism are among the issues that may get more young people interested this year, both Bositis and Gans said.

Bernard said hip-hop fans are more animated right now: "I think a lot of young people are seeing this year as the year to jump in."

But Kevin Powell, an author who has written extensively about hip-hop and has held town hall meetings in several cities about the state of Black men in America, said many of the efforts to spark the hip-hop vote are "too celebrity-driven."

"Unfortunately, we're equating the rappers with being leaders, and they're not

leaders, they're artists," said Powell, who complained there was little emphasis on issues and supporting new leaders by organizations such as Simmons' network.

"Of course it (celebrity) helps, but there has to be an alliance between the celebrities and the people who were doing the work."

Still, Benjamin Chavis, president and CEO of Simmons' Hip-Hop Summit Action Network, sees a burgeoning movement that will have a lasting impact.

"All these steps are leading to something much more enduring, because I think once people find out that they can make a difference, they're going to continue to make a difference," he said.

"You're going to see young people run for Congress, run for mayor, run for senator ... This is not just a momentary blip on the screen."

## Video Awards

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from 1993. Dave Sirulnick, one of the show's executive producers, said the idea to go host-less was created when they decided to hold the show in a large arena for the first time. Past shows were in cozier theater-like venues like Radio City Music Hall in New York.

Sirulnick said there will be five stages, some jutting out into the crowd or rising high in the air. Sirulnick said awards presentations and performances will use the whole arena, not a single stage.

"We're packing in so much stuff, I don't know if we need to have a host this year," Sirulnick said. "It's something that we've talked about for the past couple of years."

OutKast and Jay Z are joined in the video of the year category by Usher's nightclub ode "Yeah," D12/Eminem's humorous "My Band" and Britney Spears' sultry "Toxic."

Elliott, whose "I'm Really Hot" was nominated for best dance video and best choreography, says she takes pride in her videos and enjoys watching what dance moves performers like Usher will come up with next.

"This man, he's one of the people I look forward to when I see a video," Elliott said of Usher. "The last person that I used to do that with was Aaliyah."

"You want to see what the new jump-off is, what the new dance is, what's going to blow up all over the world."

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## Brandy

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licity and radio airplay for his artists. I am stunned that he is being so dirty about it."

Later, Smith reportedly issued a statement of his own. MTV.com quoted Smith as saying in part: "I prefer not to air our dirty laundry through the media. I was just stating the truth. Brandy and I have many things to work out over a long period of time, and will hopefully head in a more positive direction."

In February 2002, Brandy declared that she and Smith had been secretly wed in 2001.

"I've fallen in love with a very warm,

gentle, understanding and focused person. This summer we married quietly. A new experience, a new day for me — I couldn't be happier!" she said in a statement then.

In June 2002, Brandy gave birth to Sy'rai. MTV documented preparations for the birth with the reality series, "Brandy — Special Delivery."

Brandy, 25, and Smith broke up in early July of last year.

A former teen pop princess, Brandy also starred in her own sitcom, "Moesha," from 1996 to 2001.

Her latest album, "Afrodisiac," was released last month.