

Alexander the Gay? Epic story does disservice to history

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

Over the years, three-time Academy Award-Winner Oliver Stone has taken some heat for his unconventional slants on such political figures as JFK, Nixon and Evita. But none of his controversial bio-pics has been nearly as inflammatory as Alexander, a homo-erotic adventure about the life and liberated times of Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.)

Everybody learned in school that this magnificent Macedonian king had an insatiable urge to expand his empire eastward, but who had any idea that he had almost as unquenchable an appetite for mating with men? Whether Stone is trading in revisionist history or merely outing a known homosexual in these more tolerant times is open to



"Alexander," starring Colin Farrell, does its best to not live up to its epochal status.

debate, yet there's going to be less disagreement about the fact that the picture is a pretentious, three-hour mess. Most such overblown costume dramas tend to tell you

more about the times in which they were made than about the periods of history which they were presumably recreating. For instance, The Ten Commandments (1956), featured a toga'd Edward G. Robinson as a Hebrew slave overseer but still sounding a lot more like one of his trademark mobster characters when telling people the Biblical equivalent of "Go suck on an egg, see!" in that dis-

tinctive Lower East Side accent.

In 1955, audiences were asked to accept the idea of a swaggering John Wayne as Genghis Khan in The Conqueror. The Duke, sporting a Fu Manchu mustache, fake eyebrows and a greasy hairpiece, played the Asian invader with that classic swagger popular in Westerns and war movies made in that era.

Alexander suffers from these same sort of anachronistic biases, serving up scenario after scenario which bear no resemblance to what might have transpired over two millennia ago, unless the land was awash in same sex lust. The film stars Colin Farrell in the title role and Jared Leto as Hephaestion, his barely-closeted life partner. Although Angelina Jolie is only a year older than Farrell, she plays Alexander's snake-charming mother, Olympias, while top-heavy Rosario Dawson makes a lasting impression as Roxane, his neglected bride, but only by revealing her stripper-sized mammaries in a frustrating seduction scene.

Sir Anthony Hopkins narrates the otherwise gay play-

by-play as Ptolemy, periodically hinting at our hero's preferences with matter-of-fact observations like, "It is said that Alexander was never conquered in his lifetime, except by Hephaestion's thighs." The film's man-on-man hedonism is presented subtly, more in hugs and longing looks than in steamy lip locks. But you can't help but notice when they bring on the dancing boys, instead of the dancing girls.

Oh, yes, the movie is about Alexander's military conquests, too, and at least Stone's battle recreations, sprawling mob scenes of bloody hand-to-hand combat, prove to be compelling. The big-budget production obviously paid painstaking attention to detail in terms of costumes and set design. Too bad the same can't be said about having the cast perfect their accents or about crafting their credible dialogue or sensible subplots.

Alexander the Gay, another unconvincing conspiracy theory courtesy of Oliver Stone.

Fair (1 star). Rated R for war violence, nudity and sexuality.

Suge Knight eyed in Vibe brawl

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Police and probation officials have been reviewing video of the melee at the Vibe Awards show to determine if rap producer Marion "Suge" Knight played a role in the altercation.

Knight has denied any involvement in the incident in which a man struck Dr. Dre twice, sparking a brawl in which the attacker was stabbed and seriously injured.

Dre, whose real name is Andre Young, met with authorities Monday at the Santa Monica police station and demanded that his attacker, Jimmy "James" Johnson, be charged with assault and battery.

Videotape shows Johnson punching Dre on Nov. 16 at the second annual awards show. Johnson was then stabbed, allegedly by Young Buck, a rapper who is a protégé of Dr. Dre.

Young Buck, whose real name is David Darnell Brown, surrendered Nov. 19 to authorities and is scheduled to be arraigned Dec. 20.

Knight and Dre co-founded Death Row Records in the early 1990s and produced hits from rappers such as Tupac Shakur and Snoop Dogg. The two, however, had a falling out in the mid-1990s.

Knight was released from prison in 2001 after serving time for assault and weapons

violations and the conditions for his parole ban him from having any contact with Dre.

Knight entered the awards show without an invitation and sat just a few feet behind Dre, who was receiving a lifetime achievement award.

Attorney Milton Grimes, who once represented Knight and now represents Johnson, denied any involvement by Knight.

"As far as I know, my client has no ties whatsoever to Suge Knight," Grimes told the Los Angeles Times.

The Times, citing unidentified sources, said Santa Monica police and agents from the state Department of Corrections have been interviewing witnesses and reviewing video footage to examine Knight's actions before, during and after the melee.

"We are conducting an investigation to determine whether any parole violations took place with (Knight) at the awards show," Alfred Martinez, Los Angeles regional parole administrator for the Corrections Department, told the Times.

"Mr. Knight has some special conditions attached to his parole, and we are working with the Santa Monica police to evaluate all the circumstances that took place that evening," Martinez said.

Harlem dance school slated to reopen

NEW YORK (AP) — The Dance Theatre of Harlem School, which closed earlier this year due to poor finances and lack of insurance, will reopen on Saturday with a new executive director.

Laveen Naidu will assume the executive position when the 35-year-old school reopens, spokeswoman Ellen Zeisler said Tuesday.

The South African-born Naidu enrolled on a scholarship in 1989, rose to principal dancer at the ballet company and later became an administrator.

"Really more than anybody, he knows the execu-

tive side of DTH and after many in-depth conversations, (founder) Arthur Mitchell needed a partner who has certain skills and abilities to move the company in the future," Zeisler said.

The Dance Theatre of Harlem School, founded by Mitchell and Karel Shook in 1969, provides training in classical ballet and related arts. The school is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Dance and is listed as an institution of higher learning by the state Department of Education.

The school closed six weeks ago after a lack of fund-

ing and the cancellation of its insurance rendered it inoperable.

Zeisler said the school has since found new funding, new insurance and new direction with the help of Michael Kaiser, president of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, who developed a business restructuring of the school, pro bono.

More details were to be announced at a midday news conference with Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

"Things are now put into place and now we will be open soundly on the fourth," Zeisler said.

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