

Mac, Kutcher add hilarity to remake of Poitier film

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

When "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" was first released back in December of 1967, interracial marriage was still a hot-button issue. After all, the U.S. Supreme Court had just legalized the practice in June of that year in the landmark Loving v. the State of Virginia decision. So, by design, director Stanley Kramer's politically-tinged melodrama served as a cinematic litmus test of whether or not America was really ready to put aside past prejudices and empathize with the plight of a mixed couple whose only crime was to fall in love at a time of intolerance.

The original, which was nominated for a total of 10 Academy Awards, featured a star-studded cast, including Spencer Tracy (in his final role), Katherine Hepburn (in an Oscar-winning performance), Sidney Poitier, Isabel Sanford and Beah Richards.

The late William Rose landed an Oscar for fashioning such a thought-provoking script which could trigger the conscience of an entire nation. The movie proved to be so successful, in fact, that it was still in theaters when Martin Luther King was assassinated in April of 1968.

Though Rose has been credited as the brains behind "Guess Who," he's probably



Bernie Mac, left, and Ashton Kutcher, provide loads of laughs in "Guess Who."

rotating in his grave like a gyroscope over this virtually unrecognizable remake which has eliminated his version's searing social statements in favor of familiar staples of the slapstick humor genre. As a result, this remake bears less resemblance to the Hollywood classic it is named after than to "Meet the Parents," another comedy about a nosy,

overprotective father suspicious about his daughter's beau.

In deciding to play it entirely for laughs, director Kevin Rodney Sullivan ("Barbershop 2") tapped a couple of sitcom stars, Bernie Mac ("The Bernie Mac Show") and Ashton Kutcher ("That '70s Show") to fill the shoes of the esteemed actors who'd first created the roles. With the colors of their characters also reversed this time around, it is the African-American father who has a big problem swallowing the idea of a White son-in-law.

The story takes place in upscale Cranford, New Jersey, a quiet slice of suburbia where Percy (Mac) and Marilyn (Judith Scott) Jones are planning to renew their wedding vows at

an elaborate 25th wedding anniversary party to be held in their backyard. The occasion will also mark the couple's first opportunity to meet their daughter Theresa's (Zoe Saldana) new boyfriend, Simon (Kutcher).

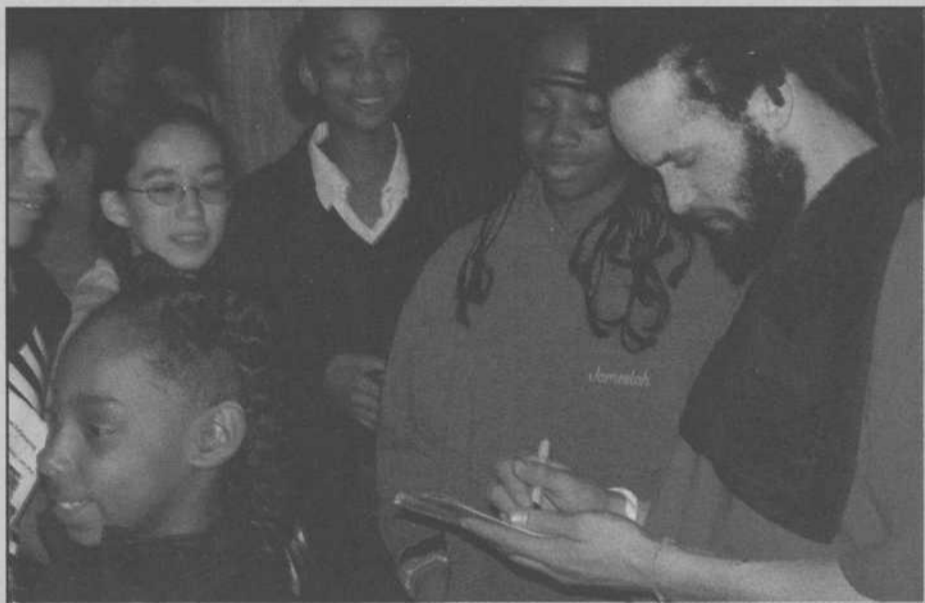
Percy, a bank loan officer, has already pre-approved Simon as a prospective suitor, having run a credit check which indicates that he has a great job as a stockbroker with a top investment company. But what this Black bigot never stopped to consider was whether or not he might be White.

Upon Simon and Theresa's arrival in town, Percy sets the tone for the rest of the film when he mistakenly welcomes their Black cabbie (Mike Epps) with open arms while simultaneously ordering the boyfriend to carry the suitcases inside. And what continues to ensue, even after the confusion is sorted out, are more inane antics unbecoming of someone of Percy's intelligence and stature.

For instance, he insists on sharing a bed with Simon in a padlocked room in order to preserve his daughter's chastity. That sounds like an episode on a typical, TV farce. But Mac and Kutcher, as consummate comedians, have the timing and chops to breathe some life into dialogue that sounds so far removed from reality. Plus, they're talented enough thespians to make the tension between them palpable, if not memorable.

Tack on a rabbit-out-of-the-hat twist which sets up the heartwarming finale and I guess "Guess Who" remains recommended, provided you enter the theater expecting nothing more than an hour-and-a-half escape into sitcom-style silliness.

Very Good (3 stars). Rated PG-13 for sex-related humor.



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

World famous tap dancing phenomenon Savion Glover takes time to sign autographs after his high-spirited, high-energy performance at Artemus Ham Hall on March 21.

Glover

(Continued from Page 6) a long way since then. These days, his size 12 1/2 feet are shoed in Capezio tap shoes that he uses as an instrument as much as the talented jazz ensemble uses the bass, drums, piano and saxophone.

I was stunned as I watched him use not only the taps on the bottom of his shoes but adjust his foot so that he was tapping on the side of his shoes, also. This man has taken tap to a new level, and after watching him perform, it's not hard to believe that he still has more surprises in store and that he hasn't even begun to scratch the surface of his talent.

Glover is the 1996 Tony

Award winner for his choreography in the Broadway smash hit "Bring In 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk." His stellar career includes his breakout Broadway performance in "Tap Dance Kid" and his subsequent Broadway hits "Black and Blue" and "Jelly's Last Jam." Glover made his film debut at age 13 in "Tap" with Gregory Hines and Sammy Davis Jr. and counts among his numerous credits notable performances that include "Savion Glover's Stomp, Slide and Swing: In Performance at the White House" and his "Classical Savion" show.

His latest creation, "Improvography" tours the nation with performances in

Salt Lake, New Orleans, Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburgh and Baltimore, among others. An entire listing of tour dates and locations can be found at www.nederlandworld.com. "Improvography" is one of many performances of the 2004 - 2005 "Stars at the Center" lineup at the Performing Arts Center on the UNLV campus.

For dance enthusiasts, the Center brings another stellar event as the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company takes the stage in April. For a full schedule of events at the Performing Arts Center, visit the pac.nevada.edu website, or call 895-ARTS (895-2787).



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