

Ice Cube fails at wheel of Vin Diesel vehicle

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

Three years ago, it looked like Vin Diesel had his own James Bond-type franchise in the making, at least one for the Joystick Generation, when he was introduced as the brash, buff and bald Xander Cage, aka XXX.

This triple-threat, extreme sports enthusiast-turned-secret agent chased down diabolical villains while performing an eye-popping array of superhuman feats, whether snowboarding, motor-biking, parachuting, speed boating or merely driving a car.

Despite having raked-in hundreds of millions at the box office, the film's producers committed a comedy-of-errors on their way to a sequel.

For instead of simply milking their ready-made cash cow, they decided to go in a totally different direction with "XXX: State of the Union."

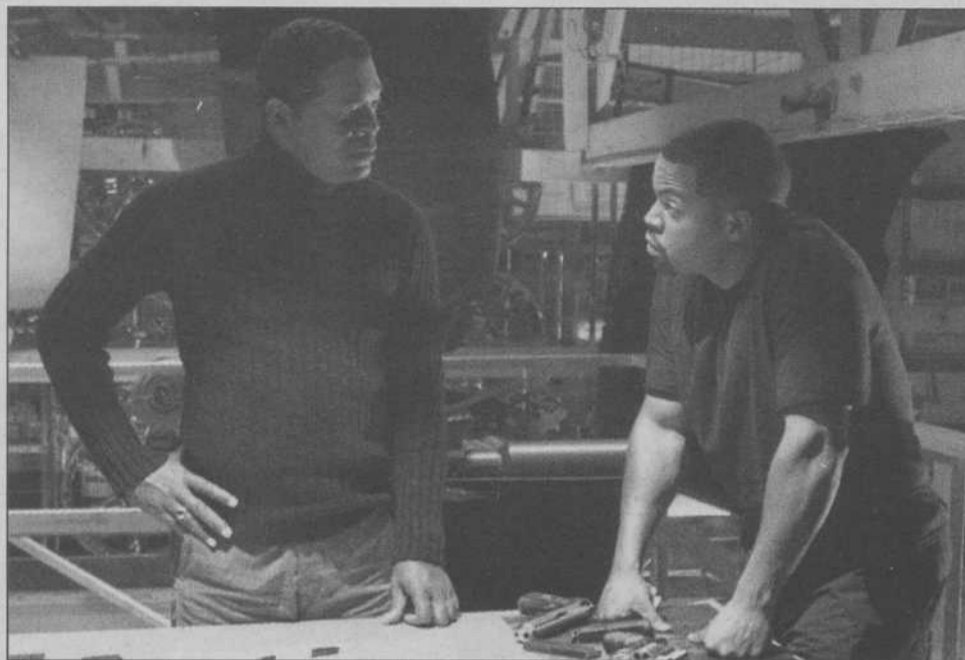
For instance, they were too stingy to re-sign their star, a proven commodity whose name was already associated

with the title role. Furthermore, they went out of their way to kill off the title character during the first five minutes of the flick, only mentioning this critical development in an oblique reference to an unfortunate incident in Bora Bora.

In fact, the only two actors to return for the second installment are Samuel L. Jackson and Michael Roof, reprising their roles as Agents Gibbons and Shavers, respectively.

And in the most stunning case of miscasting since a cross-dressing Cuba Gooding Jr. in "Boat Trip," the relatively versatile Diesel was ostensibly replaced by Ice Cube, whose one-note, tough-guy act wears thin real fast. Even the crew behind the camera has been overhauled, starting with scriptwriter Simon Kinberg, a Brown and Columbia University graduate who makes an underwhelming screen-play debut, here.

The curious choice of replacement director was none other than Lee Tamahori, whose previous production,



Samuel L. Jackson, left, and Ice Cube star in the excruciating "XXX: State of the Union."

"Die Another Day," was the 007 flick which opened up against the original "XXX" back in 2002.

Why this movie is even referred to as "XXX 2" is beyond the ken of this critic, because it fails to resemble the first in terms of feel, tone, dialogue, cinematography, special effects, anything.

For whatever reason, Tamahori chose to abandon all that spectacular stunt

work which had imbued the original with a sky high "Wow!" quotient. Visually-captivating cinematography has been replaced by a parade of tortoise-like military hardware and custom cars fresh from a ghetto fabulous chop shop.

The story opens with the ever-impatient Gibbons and the terminally-nerdy Shavers barely escaping a bloody ambush at National Security

Agency headquarters. Inexplicably, they somehow immediately sense that this is an inside job, the work of Agency renegades bent on overthrowing the U.S. government.

So, they recruit stone-faced Darius Stone (Cube), a former colleague unfairly rotting behind bars for striking a corrupt superior officer (Willem Dafoe) who has since risen in the ranks to

Secretary of Defense. Patriotic Darius proceeds to break out of prison, not to vindicate himself but to save the life of the President. In preparation, he returns to the 'hood where he gets outfitted with a posse, fried chicken, guns, ammo and autos by a top heavy ex-girlfriend (Nona Gaye) with a heart of gold.

After about two hours of nonsense, a battle royal finally unfolds between the homeboys and one of the most formidable, treasonous conspiracies ever to unfold on American soil.

But nothing is more boring than watching out-of-date army vehicles lumbering aimlessly around Washington, D.C., a little too obviously waiting to be blown-up or tank-jacked by the Bloods and the Crips. Except maybe hearing Ice Cube utter corny lines like, "Tonight, the safety of the Free World is in the hands of a bunch of hustlers and thieves!"

The State of the Union? XXXcruciating!

Poor (0 stars). Rating: PG-13 for profanity and intense violence.



Bobby Brown, right, leaves the Norfolk County Probate and Family Court in Canton, Mass., Wednesday with his lawyer Phaedra Parks, left, and an unidentified friend, center, following a hearing on his alleged failure to fully comply with the court's prior orders for the support of a child he had with Kim Ward.

Brown hauled to court over children's educational trust

Special to Sentinel-Voice

A family court judge on Wednesday gave R&B singer Bobby Brown two days to prove he has the income to fund educational trusts for two of his children.

Norfolk County Family Court Judge Paula Carey gave Brown, who lives in Georgia, until Friday to produce contracts showing he has enough income to establish the trusts.

Brown, a Roxbury native, said he didn't know the payments hadn't started.

"I've been shooting a television show and recording an album, so it's hard," he said. "For me, it's easy to not know that a payment is not paid because other people are supposed to pay them."

Last year, Brown was jailed for a day after he failed to pay \$63,500 in child support payments he owed Kim Ward of

Stoughton. He was released after making the payment.

Brown was summoned to court in March after falling behind on his payments, said Patrick McDermott, the court's Register of Probate.

By Wednesday, Brown had caught up on the payments but still hadn't established the educational trusts he'd promised to set up years ago, McDermott said.

Brown, 36, told Carey he had money coming in from reality TV and music projects. He is expected to make four payments totaling \$160,000 within the next six months to establish the trusts.

Brown, who lives in Alpharetta, north of Atlanta, with his wife, Whitney Houston, will be the subject of a new eight-episode reality TV show, "Being Bobby Brown," that will debut June 30 on Bravo.

JERRY'S NUGGET
ROYAL STREET THEATRE
1821 Las Vegas Blvd. N. (702) 399-3000

Motown Fridays at Jerry's Nugget Casino!

Appearing
May 6th and May 27th
THE EXPERIENCE



Appearing
May 13th and May 20th
SHO TYME

Celebrate Motown in May with FREE Prize Giveaways!

Gentlemen \$5/Ladies FREE
with a 2 drink minimum purchase