

Freeman, Li strange bedfellows in misadventure

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

When you put Morgan Freeman and Jet Li in the same movie, something's gotta give, given that these actors are generally cast as incompatible types of characters, indicative of completely different genres.

Typically, Morgan plays that melancholy, wise-beyond-his-years, old soul we've seen in such cerebral productions as "Million Dollar Baby" and "Driving Miss Daisy."

Jet, on the other hand, has let his fists and feet do the talking in an unending string of relatively superficial, martial arts flicks like "Kiss of

the Dragon," "Romeo Must Die" and "Cradle 2 the Grave."

Thus, the burning question about "Unleashed," their current collaboration, was whether the picture would be an introspective mood piece or a high-octane affair chock-full of gratuitous gore.

The answer is that the end result was an unsatisfying compromise which features elements of both, though the film trades far more frequently in fight sequences than in tender Kodak moments.

This is easy to understand when one considers that the movie was written by Luc Besson ("The Fifth Ele-



"Unleashed" stars Jet Li, left, and Morgan Freeman do their best with a weak script.

ment") and directed by Louis Leterrier ("The Transporter"), purveyors of a very violent brand of cinema.

Thus, this movie's incessant bloodletting and high attrition-rate prevents the audience from taking its sensitive

side seriously.

The story is set in present-day Glasgow, Scotland, where, somehow, no one ever informed a sadistic loan shark named Bart (Bob Hoskins) that the days of slavery ended eons ago. For he is the malevolent master of Danny (Li), a never-civilized attack human raised in a cage and trained to kill whenever he's let off his electronic leash. Bart uses his lethal human weapon both as a bodyguard and as an unbeatable entrant in fight-to-the-death contests staged in illegal, after-hours joints.

Danny, stolen as a child, was told that he had been abandoned by his mother, a prostitute. But then, what explains the mystical spell he falls under the lucky day he hears Sam (Freeman) playing Mozart's Sonata No. 7? With the help of his 18-year-old stepdaughter Victoria (Kerry Condon), Sam, a blind, widowed, piano repairman with a heart of gold, decides to take in the abused savage and to make him his next reclamation project.

Although this plotline might resemble that of a makeover movie, remember, it actually unfolds more like a Hong Kong chopsocky than "My Fair Lady." Courtesy of some woefully choreographed stunts, wave after wave of goons get smoked by Denny while he learns to appreciate classical music on his path to freedom, redemption and his roots.

A most improbable, artless, ham-fisted, and irritating excuse for glorifying senseless slaughter.

Fair (1 star). Rating: R for profanity, sexuality, nudity, and graphic, gratuitous and gruesome violence.

Andre 3000 signs Nickelodeon-MTV deal

NEW YORK (AP) - Andre 3000 says kids' movies need to be edgier — and he plans to make it happen through a new deal with Nickelodeon and MTV.

"I've noticed that kids, they're looking up to the Jay-Zs, they're looking up to OutKasts," the rapper (and father of a 7-year-old boy with singer Erykah Badu) told The Associated Press. "So kids' movies and cartoons, they're getting smarter ... because it seems like kids are cooler."

As part of the deal, Andre, one-half of the multiplatinum duo OutKast, is set to star in a new Nick Movies film, "The Hit," which he will also co-produce.

It's about a fifth-grader, seeking a new wife for his

father, who discovers his next-door neighbor is Cupid.

"They called me about a project that wasn't even a script at the time," he said. "They pitched the idea to me and I loved it."

The deal also gives MTV Networks the option to produce feature films and TV projects by Andre — and he has a lot of ideas to develop.

"Even with videos, I've always been involved with writing the concept and writing the narrative," he said. "I felt like I had something to offer to the film world."

Andre (born Andre Benjamin) had a supporting role in this year's comedy "Be Cool," which co-starred John Travolta and Uma Thurman. Later this year, an OutKast

movie is expected to be released on HBO. He also recently wrapped up the movie "Four Brothers," directed by John Singleton.

He says acting has taught him to be less concerned about his ego.

"In music, if you don't feel like going to the studio that night, you don't have to. When you're in a film, you're with a crew, it's not about you at all. Film is totally crossing out vanity and crossing out yourself," he said.

He's also grown as an actor by learning not to be self-conscious about his screen performance.

"I think the more I do, the less I think about it, and the less I think about it, the better it is to me," he said. "It's

almost like getting comfortable with being uncomfortable."

Andre isn't letting his music fall by the wayside, however.

He and Big Boi are starting work on a new album, the follow-up to their Grammy winning "Speakerboxxx/The Love Below."

Cosby's lawyers deny woman's claim

PHILADELPHIA (AP) - Lawyers for Bill Cosby denied allegations that he drugged and sexually molested a woman at his home but acknowledged that he gave her over-the-counter medication after she complained she was having trouble sleeping.

The entertainer offered the woman 1 1/2 tablets of the allergy medication Benadryl during a visit to his suburban Philadelphia home in January 2004, his attorneys said in court filings this week.

The woman sued Cosby in March, and lawyers appeared before a federal judge Wednesday to discuss whether a gag order should be imposed in the case. Prosecutors examined the allegations against Cosby earlier this year, but declined to file charges, citing insufficient evidence.

The woman was an employee at Cosby's alma mater, Temple University, and now lives in Canada.

Cosby's attorneys filed a motion last week asking for an order barring the parties from discussing any pertinent information disclosed during the discovery phase of the trial, including the depositions of other women who claim to have been harassed or assaulted

by the comedian.

"We are entitled to a level playing field here," Patrick O'Connor, an attorney for Cosby, told the judge Wednesday. "Discovery materials are not matters of public record."

The woman's attorneys said any gag order would unfairly punish their client. When other people speak highly of Cosby's character in public, even without mentioning the allegations, that gives him an unfair advantage, attorney Delores Troiani said.

"The problem with this case is that our client has nobody to speak publicly for her but us," Troiani told the judge. "He is truly Goliath and she is truly David."

In a letter Wednesday, an attorney for The Associated Press asked the court to deny the motion for a blanket protective order, citing Cosby's status as an entertainment icon and role model.

The woman claimed Cosby gave her three blue pills that rendered her semiconscious, then sexually molested her at his home in suburban Philadelphia in January 2004. She said she awoke to find her bra undone and her clothes in disarray.



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