

'Snakes' fun, campy but cliché-ridden

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

Benefiting from the best pre-release hype since "The Blair Witch Project," the Internet has been abuzz about this picture practically since the day the project was greenlighted by New Line. In fact, the blogosphere actually influenced its director, David Ellis, to do five days of reshoots to add R-rated scenes not in his original PG-13 script because his growing legion of fans had come to expect them due to the phenomenal popularity of a parody.

This electronic word-of-mouth might have been unnecessary anyway, given that "Snakes on a Plane" represents a rare case of cinematic truth-in-advertising.

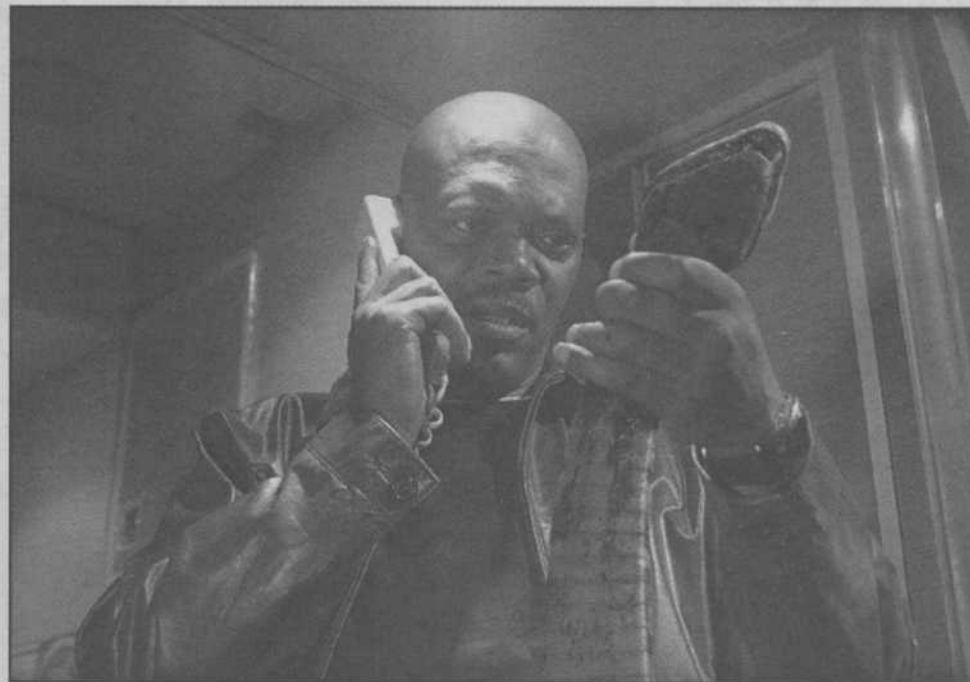
For between the self-explanatory title and its high-octane trailers, one can readily discern exactly what this campy cross of the disaster and horror genres is all about.

The fun starts inside the already claustrophobic quarters of a cramped commercial airliner where the motley assortment of mostly annoying

passengers filing in are about to get even more aggravated. Unabashedly politically incorrect in terms of relying on simplistically drawn stereotypes, every character here is easily recognizable.

There's the self-important, trash-talking gangsta rapper (Flex Alexander) with a couple of bully, path-clearing bodyguards (Kenan Thompson and Keith Dallas); the spoiled-rotten debutante (Rachel Blanchard) sporting one of those lapdogs, which you could use as a duster; the effete coward (Gerard Plunkett); the doting mother (Elsa Pataky) with the whining baby; two young brothers (Daniel Hogarth and Casey Dubois) traveling alone; a couple (Emily Holmes and Tygh Runyan) in heat, eager to join the mile-high club, etcetera.

Even the crewmembers are all obvious archetypes, from the effeminate flight attendant (Bruce James) to the bimbo blonde stewardess (Sunny Mabrey) to the fanny-pinching pilot (David Koechner) to the selfless stewardess (Julianna Margulies) on her last flight



Samuel L. Jackson cuffs an offending snake in the campy but effective horror flick.

before law school who somehow summons up courage she never knew she had.

The bad attitudes in the cabin start even before the jet leaves the ground, when everyone in first-class, just prior to takeoff, is informed that they've just been bumped back to coach to make way for FBI Agent Neville Flynn (Samuel L. Jackson) and eyewitness Sean Jones (Nathan Phillips).

Flynn's been assigned to escort the flaky surfer dude from Hawaii to Los Angeles to ensure his safe arrival in court to testify in the murder trial of Eddie Kim (Byron Lawson), a vicious mob boss.

What nobody knows, of course, is that Kim has hatched a plan to crash the 747 by stowing a crate of venomous snakes aboard, timed to be released while the jet is 30,000 feet in the air

over the Pacific Ocean.

Fortunately, as patently absurd as this premise sounds, "Snakes on a Plane" does not disappoint.

Samuel L. Jackson enjoys his best outing in years as a boiling badass who loses his composure as soon as all hell breaks loose.

His character is prone to blurting out urgent, anticipated non-sequiturs like "I've had it with these

mother-[expletive] snakes on this mother-[expletive] plane!" which elicit big laughs from the Internet-prepped audience.

As for the special effects, they were created via a convincing enough combination of computer-generated imagery and over 400 real snakes.

Furthermore, inventive director Ellis comes up with an array of increasingly humorous and amusing, if simultaneously shocking and disgusting, ways to dispatch victims as the body count rises.

Tautly edited, these grisly killings are well concealed, and arrive accompanied by a well-synchronized, thunderous burst from the score designed to elicit screams as you jump out of your skin.

Thus, although the film is filled with humorous asides and targeted at teenagers, be forewarned that it easily earns its well-deserved R-rating, due to all the gratuitous gore, nudity, sex and eroticized violence.

Best horror flick since "Dawn of the Dead."

Excellent (4 stars). R-rated for sexual references.

Busta arraigned on assault

NEW YORK (AP) - Rapper Busta Rhymes was arraigned Sunday on an assault charge after he was reportedly accused of attacking a man for spitting on his car.

The New York Police Department

released few details about the arrest, saying only that the incident occurred Aug. 12.

Rhymes was arraigned on a charge of third-degree assault and was released on his

own recognizance, said Barbara Thompson, spokeswoman for the Manhattan district attorney's office.

He is due back in court Oct. 24.

A lawyer for Rhymes, Scott Leemon, said the charge should have merited only a desk appearance ticket.

"This is payback by the NYPD," he said.

Police said the rapper didn't qualify for a desk appearance ticket because of the seriousness of the charge.

Police have wanted to interview Rhymes since the February shooting death of one of his bodyguards, Israel Ramirez.

Ramirez, 29, was killed outside a Brooklyn studio where Rhymes was recording a music video.

The performer and another bodyguard were sued the following month by a fan who says the two men beat him after he asked for the rapper's autograph.

Police arrested Rhymes Saturday evening after he performed at the AmsterJam Music Festival on Randalls Island. The New York Post said police believe Rhymes beat a man who spat on his car near Gramercy Park.



Sentinel-Voice photo by Marty Frierson

TURNTABLE ROYALTY

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