



ASK DEANNA! Real People, Real Advice

Ask Deanna! Is an advice column known for its fearless approach to reality-based subjects!

Dear Deanna!

I'm a single parent, and I never have enough money to buy gifts for my children. I made a mistake this year by spending the money I had saved on dating and a relationship. I spent money on dinners, new clothes and my boyfriend thinking he would be around for the holidays and help me out. We broke up, and now I don't have money, and my kids are going to be so hurt. How do I explain and make this up to my children on Christmas?

Michelle B.
Decatur, GA

Dear Michelle:

The calendar doesn't change, and Christmas continues to come on the same day every year. There's no excuse for your selfish behavior. Although the holiday should be spiritual instead of material, you still set your kids up for heartbreak. You put a man before your children's happiness, and now they have to suffer. You need to hustle and find a charity or church to help you and get your act together as the New Year comes around.

Dear Deanna!

I am going to make my last New Year's resolution in 2008. I've decided to live to the fullest, eliminate negative people and put myself first. The moment I made this announcement, the people I thought were friends laughed at me, and my family thought the idea was a joke. I was shocked that they laughed and hurt because I see how they really feel about me. How do I enforce my new resolution knowing I have to start with family and friends first?

Carolynn
Omaha, NE

Dear Carolynn:

You're getting the idea of putting one foot before the other and then keep on trucking. You've managed to flush away your dead weight and expose your naysayers all in one breath. All you have to do is stop negativity as soon as it starts. Do the things you want to do, and put yourself first in most situations. Hopefully, you'll reflect happiness and confidence that'll make the people in your circle jump on the bandwagon. If not, smile and keep it moving.

Dear Deanna!

My husband gets so involved in the holidays that it upsets me. He spends too much money, spreads too much cheer and wants to have a party or go to parties. When the holidays are over, he complains about finances, talks about people that messed up our house and gossips. I always see this as a double standard, and if he's only into the celebration to show off, he needs to stop. Is there anything I can say to him so he'll see that he's a Christmas fake?

Concerned Wife
Online Reader

Dear Concerned Wife:

Your husband is a perpetrator that wants to appear as if he's the big spender and social butterfly when he's actually out of his league. If you've been tagging along with him, you're just as guilty. However, there's hope. And if this is truly a serious problem, tell him you're tapping out of the holidays and want to focus on good will and spirituality instead of the commercial stuff. If his heart is in the right place, he'll agree and see the error of his ways.

Write: Ask Deanna! Email: askdeanna1@yahoo.com
or 264 S. LaCienega Blvd. Suite 1283 Beverly Hills, CA 90211
Website: www.askdeanna.com.

Apocalyptic story uneven, fun

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

Written by Richard Matheson in 1954, "I Am Legend" was a harrowing tale of survival, pitting the last human alive against the horde of bloodthirsty vampires who had taken control of Earth. The book's hero, Robert Neville, relied on a combination of garlic, mirrors, stakes, sunlight and crosses to keep the cannibals at bay while he simultaneously tried to come up with a scientific explanation for the plague which had turned everybody else into zombies.

"The Last Man on Earth" (1964), starring Vincent Price, was the first film adaptation of the apocalyptic best seller. That, in turn, was followed by "The Omega Man" (1971) with Charlton Heston and, more recently, by "I Am Omega" (2007), a straight-to-video rip-off released just last month.

Now, we have "I Am Legend", a relatively-realistic, modern update of the original which reflects present-day sensibilities by having its apocalyptic scenario result from a man-made virus. The picture is a Will Smith vehicle in the purest sense, given that he spends more than half of the movie on screen alone (ala Tom Hanks in "Castaway"), unless you count the omnipresent Samantha, his trusty, tag-along German Shepherd.

Thus, the production represents a true test of Smith's star power, as its fortunes are fated to rise or fall to the extent that he convinces his audience to invest emotion-



"I am Legend" extends Will Smith's canon of blockbuster movies that pull at emotions.

ally in his lonely protagonist's desperate plight as he perambulates the eerie exoskeleton of a de-populated Manhattan. The point of departure is 2009, which is when one Dr. Alice Crippen (Emma Thompson) announces the discovery of a cure for cancer to the world, not knowing that the vaccine also causes rabies.

Fast-forward three years, and we find New York in chaos. The healthy few are in the midst of being quickly evacuated, while all the infected folks are morphing into ghouls and being left behind. And although Lt. Colonel Robert Neville (Smith) has been given a clean bill of health, he gallantly opts to stay in the city to work on an antidote.

You see, he's a virologist, and has a fully-equipped, state-of-the-art lab in the basement of his brownstone bordering Washington Square Park. So, after he

tearfully bids his wife (Salli Richardson) and daughter (Willow Smith) adieu, he proceeds to divide his time between scientific research and blowing away the occasional nocturnal creature he encounters after dark.

Not surprisingly, Smith comes across as quite the macho charmer in his familiar role as the hero having to save the planet. After all, he's successfully played this sort of character plenty of times before — most notably in such CGI-driven spectacles as "Independence Day" (1996), "Men in Black" (1997) and "Men in Black II" (2002). But who knows how a holiday season release of this summer-style blockbuster will be met.

"I Am Legend" is actually at its best early on, while Will is solo and captured starkly against the breathtaking backdrop of the vast, urban wasteland. Unfortunately, the second-rate special effects

leave a lot to be desired, so the arrival of the cheesy monsters he has to wrestle with fails to measure up to the tension built in anticipation.

The movie has a couple of other annoying flaws, neither of which could be discussed without spoiling the fun. Suffice it to say that the first involves the introduction of two new characters near the end, and the other revolves around the movie's revised resolution, which delivers a distinctly different message from that of the book. Nonetheless, it's got a great performance by Will Smith and just enough edge-of-your-seat entertainment to remain recommended, even if the cinematic house of cards collapses during the third act.

"I am Legend" grossed \$76 million in its first weekend, making it largest grossing film ever in December.

Good (2 stars). Rated PG-13 for intense sequences of sci-fi and mature themes.

Writing, producing duo set for Hall

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Legendary songwriting and production team Kenneth Gamble and Leon Huff,

the architects of the classic Philly soul sound, will be inducted into the 2008 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame with a

presentation of the highly prestigious Ahmet Ertegun Award.

The Grammy-winning,

multi-platinum selling duo is responsible for one of the most recognizable and influential catalogs of pop and soul. Their resume includes 70 No. 1 pop and R&B singles; 175 RIAA Gold, Platinum and multi-platinum certifications; five Grammys, including the Recording Academy's Trustees Award and more than 3,500 songs produced to date.

Gamble and Huff's sound is internationally recognized as "The Sound of Philadelphia." A Gamble and Huff song is played somewhere in the world every 13.5 minutes.

Jay-Z, 50 Cent, Daft Punk, Michael Buble, Mary J. Blige, Usher, Jennifer (See Philly, Page 7)



Kenneth Gamble and Leon Huff are to be enshrined in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.