

Black charming as funny Panda

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

Po (Jack Black) is a clumsy panda who works in his family's noodle shop in an idyllic oasis known as the Valley of Peace. Instead of concentrating on customers, the young Kung Fu fan always seems to be distracted by dreams of studying martial arts alongside the Furious Five, a legendary quintet comprised of the Tigress (Angelina Jolie), the Crane (David Cross), the Praying Mantis (Seth Rogen), the Viper (Lucy Liu) and the Monkey (Jackie Chan). However, he's so uncoordinated that he's too embarrassed to share his secret desire with his father (James Hong) who reasonably expects his son to take over the restaurant when he retires.

This all changes the day elderly Master Oogway (Randall Duk Kim), a sage sensei, has an eerie premonition about Tai Lung (Ian McShane), a former protégé of his gone bad. He has a hunch that the treacherous leopard has escaped from prison after 20 years behind bars, and that he's headed back to the region with revenge in mind.

So, in accordance with an ancient Chinese prophecy, Oogway stages a formal ceremony to name a dragon warrior to defend the king-

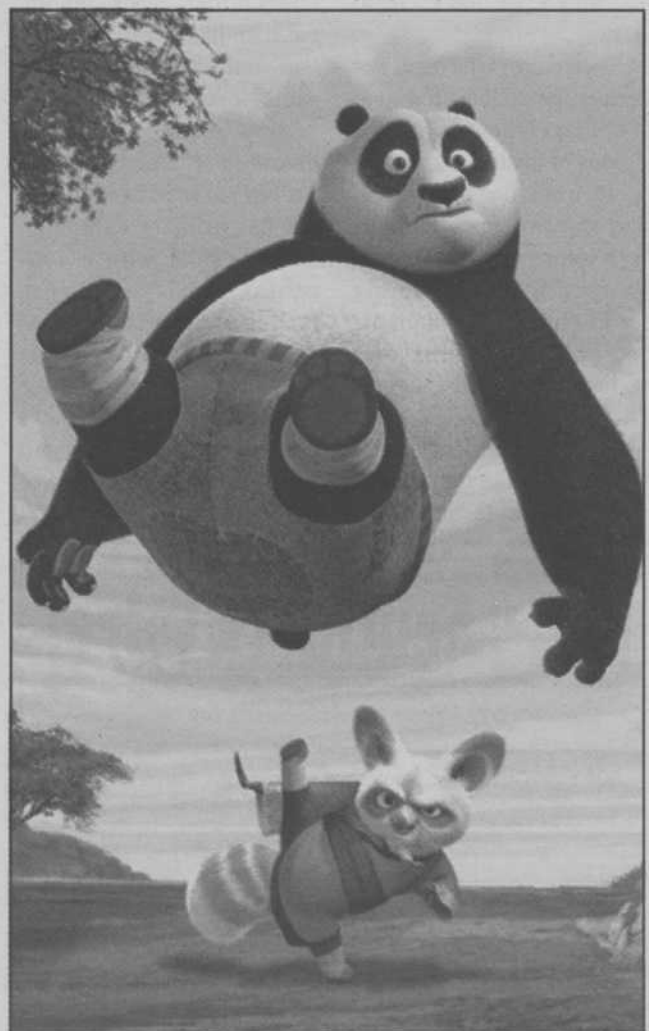
dom. Everyone expects him to pick from among the "Furious Five," but a comedy of errors leads to his settling on Po, a late-arriving spectator who makes an attention-grabbing entrance.

Now afforded an opportunity to prove himself worthy, the second act of this action-oriented cartoon revolves around Po's being whipped into shape for the big showdown by Master Shifu (Dustin Hoffman). If you're at all familiar with the overcoming the odds fight genre, you know exactly what's involved, a rigorous regimen featuring trademark tableaux ranging from "Rocky's" one-handed pushups to "The Karate Kid's" balancing himself on one foot.

Like a cross of Mickey and Mister Miyagi, Shifu employs reverse psychology, telling Po he's nothing but a lazy bum who'll never amount to anything, while mixing in trite fortune cookie philosophy like "There are no accidents!" for good measure. As for the third act, Tai Lung does indeed arrive, but far be it from me to spoil the events of the ensuing battle royal.

An animated cross of "Rocky" and "The Karate Kid" certain to delight this generation of tykes afresh.

Excellent (4 stars). Rated PG for martial arts action.



"Kung Fu Panda" is charming movie loaded with laughter.

Kelly talks to judge at porn trial

CHICAGO — R. Kelly told the judge in his child pornography trial recently that he doesn't plan to testify in his own defense.

After Judge Vincent Gaughan told Kelly he had a right to not testify, the R&B singer leaned forward at the defense table with his hands folded and — speaking for the first time at the trial — responded: "I decided not to testify."

The jury wasn't in the

room at the time.

Kelly, 41, has pleaded not guilty to charges that he videotaped himself having sex with an underage girl. Both Kelly and the alleged victim, now 23, have denied being on the tape.

In addition, the judge ruled that jurors can view the sex tape once they begin deliberating.

Kelly's lawyers had asked the judge to bar jurors from



R. KELLY

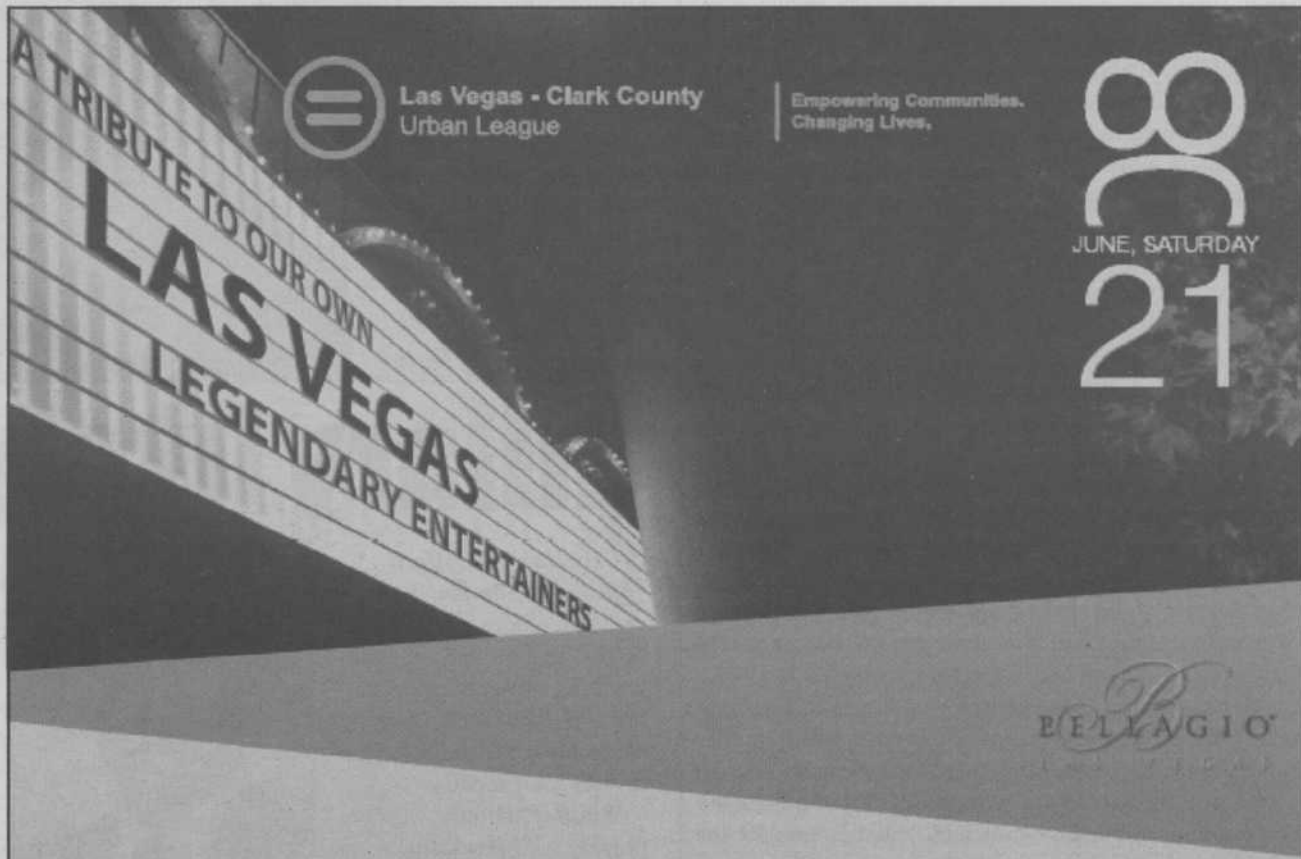
reviewing the graphic video, saying they worried jurors would overemphasize one piece of evidence. But prosecutors argued the tape is the primary subject of the trial and couldn't be kept from jurors.

Prosecutors are scheduled to call two rebuttal witnesses. Closing arguments are likely to be delivered this week.

Kelly's attorneys surprised courtroom observers

by resting their case Monday. Over two days, Kelly's lawyers called 12 witnesses. One was a forensics expert who testified there didn't appear to be a mole on the back of a man in a sex tape.

Defense attorneys say Kelly has a mole on his back, so the man on the tape can't be him. But a prosecution witness who'll take the stand for a second time is expected to challenge that claim.



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