

As alcoholic superhero, Smith needs rescue

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

John Hancock (Will Smith) is a superhero who has fallen out of favor with the public, and for good reason. First of all, he can usually be found passed out with a bottle of whiskey in his hand, draped across a bench in downtown L.A.

He routinely antagonizes pedestrians, behaving no differently than a typical bum living on Skid Row, whether cursing curious little kids for waking him or trying to molest attractive women as they pass by.

And when he springs into action as his crime-fighting alter ego, Hancock tends to cause more trouble than he's preventing.

For instance, there's the time he drunkenly intervened during a televised police freeway chase (reminiscent of O.J.'s) and overreacted after the abusive Cholos inside the white SUV called him an "a-



Will Smith plays an aimless, alcoholic superhero in the moralistic movie "Hancock."

hole."

The epithet makes him lose his temper the way the Three Stooges did whenever they heard "Niagara Falls."

So, he impaled their auto on the spire high atop the Capitol Records building, ruining one of the skyline's most recognizable landmarks in the

process.

The cleanup of that messy arrest cost the city \$9 million, prompting the fedup chief of police (Greg Kinnear) to urge the disgraced superhero to leave town.

Just as Hancock hits rock bottom he is offered a chance at redemption by Ray Embrey (Jason Bateman), a man he rescues from a car sit-

"People would also love to say... 'Hey, I killed T.I.'," he said. "Let's say if T.I. is out, didn't have any weapons around and I got shot dead in the street. The first thing people are going to say is, 'Why didn't T.I. have something to protect himself?'"

But T.I. has a new train of thought after his arrest.

"No matter how much security you have, how many guns you got, no matter how much money you got, God's will supersedes all of that," T.I. said. "So, instead of walking with guns, I now have to walk with God. I now have to trust in God's will."

He's currently on a 14-city concert tour to promote his upcoming album, "Paper Trail," which is expected to be released in September. Even though his first single, "No Matter What" has no curse words, he says it doesn't mean that the album will be profanity-free. And he won't promise that violence or drugs won't be mentioned in his lyrics.

But now, he plans to use those topics not to glorify, but to advise others about the consequences. He's trying to not disappoint the many who believe in him — like Young.

"I don't want to disgrace nobody who supported me, who believed I pushed pass this situation," T.I. said.

"I won't disgrace their good faith with another absolutely unnecessary situation."

can say things and make people move in a generation we need to touch. So he is very valuable."

From Atlanta to Los Angeles, T.I. has visited community centers, churches and schools, speaking to crowds of about 250 youths. On a short leave from house arrest in March, T.I. delivered a speech on overcoming life's tribulations to almost 30,000 churchgoers for Long's Easter service at the Georgia Dome.

T.I. is used to having an audience of millions. Last summer, his sixth album, "T.I. vs T.I.P.," debuted at No. 1 on the album charts. T.I., who also appeared in the Denzel Washington-Russell Crowe film "American Gangster," was enjoying perhaps the biggest success of his career when he was arrested just blocks away and hours before he was to headline the BET Hip-Hop Awards last October.

Federal officials said he was trying to pick up machine guns and silencers his then-bodyguard bought for him.

His actions beg the question: Why would T.I. jeopardize his rising stardom?

Fear, according to T.I. His best friend Philant Johnson was killed and three were injured in a gun shootout following a post-performance party in Cincinnati in 2006. He worried that he could suffer the same fate.

ting on the train tracks at a railroad crossing and about to be slammed by a locomotive with a full head of steam.

Grateful Ray just happens to be a public relations expert who diagnoses that all his well-meaning savior really needs is an image overhaul. So, he brings Hancock home to meet his wife (Charlize Theron) and young son (Jae Head), before convincing him to try alcohol and anger management counseling, and to don a superhero outfit, so that he can at least look the part.

The trouble is "Hancock" has a very big secret, which, if divulged here, would entirely spoil the picture for the reader.

Suffice to say that he's suffering from amnesia, so he himself is initially unaware of the rabbit about to be pulled out of the hat.

In a summer blockbuster season boasting several spectacular comic book adaptations in "Iron Man," "The Hulk" and "Wanted," the last thing we need is a spoof of the superhero genre so unpleasant and unfocused. The fatal flaw is the fact that the protagonist isn't even likable.

Who would opt to cast the ever-charming Fresh Prince against type as a surly, foul-mouthed misanthrope? Nobody wants to root for an a-hole (there I called him one, too) who refers to women by the b-word, bullies children and makes a pass at the spouse of the only guy willing to help him.

Equally annoying is the awkward, improbable and terribly twisted plotline which can only be comprehended with the benefit of 20-20 hindsight once all the pieces of the puzzle have finally been revealed. I'm not even sure how I would explain the resolution to an inquiring child incapable of such contorted mental calisthenics.

For better or worse, Will Smith is a name long associated with Fourth of July blockbusters. Unfortunately, "Hancock" is more on the order of "Wild Wild West," than "Independence Day" or "Men in Black." Don't expect to laugh more than five times and you won't be disappointed.

Fair (1 star). Rated PG-13 for profanity, mild violence and sci-fi scenes.

T.I.

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movement until he finally took ownership of the guiding role.

During their meeting, T.I. said Young compared the rapper to King.

"Once he saw that no one else wanted that responsibility, he was forced into it," said T.I., recalling his conversation with Young about King. "People depended on him and pushed it on him. It wasn't until (Young) said in Montgomery (Ala.) that King accepted the responsibility of being the leader of the civil rights movement. He compared that to my situation."

When asked about the comment, Young neither denied or completely confirmed it.

While Bishop Eddie Long, leader of megachurch New Birth Missionary Baptist Church, doesn't speak of T.I. in King-like terms, he does believe the rapper — who has given himself the boastful title "King of the South" — has the drive and ability to reach a large mass of people even Long can't reach.

"Here's a man who has a past," the pastor said. "Here's a man who has gotten himself in some trouble because of decisions. Here's a man that commands a great audience of young people, who ... may not be the prophet of the day."

"But he is someone who

front row

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