

Murphy's alien schtick misfires in campy film

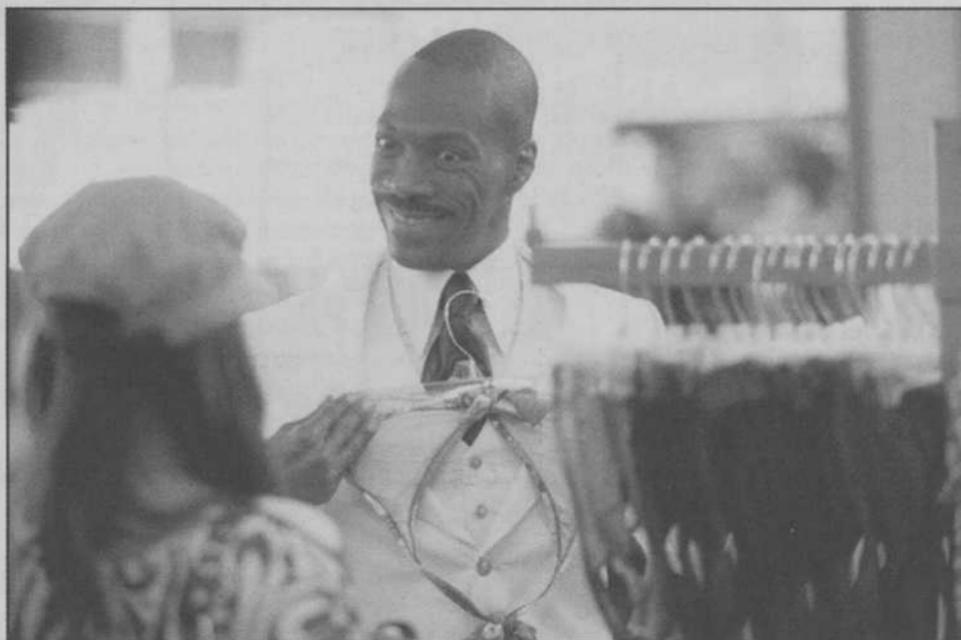
By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

In 1984, John Sayles directed "The Brother from Another Planet," a thought-provoking, sci-fi comedy about an alien who washes ashore at Ellis Island and makes his way to Manhattan where he does his best to blend in because he's being chased by a couple of bounty hunters who had followed him to Earth.

Aside from being hilarious, what made that screen classic worthwhile was its touching on a timely theme in a meaningful manner.

For the film's protagonist was an escaped slave who looked exactly like a Black man. However, he had been persecuted back on his planet, not on account of his skin color but rather because he was born with only three toes on each foot.

Ironically, his effort to survive in New York City was complicated by his having to accommodate himself



"Meet Dave" stars comedy, movie and entertainment legend Eddie Murphy as an alien.

to an unfamiliar form of prejudice, namely, American racism. Sayles' overall aim was to make a subtle statement about bigotry of any form by showing how silly it would be to divide people into minority groups based on the number of their toes or along the lines of any other

arbitrary physical characteristics.

Almost a quarter century later, we now have "Meet Dave," a sci-fi adventure which borrows Brother's basic premise, while conveniently ignoring the movie's more cerebral aspects.

The dumbing-down is no

surprise since it stars Eddie Murphy, who is again directed by Brian Robbins with whom he successfully collaborated last year on the equally brainless "Norbit."

The familiar-sounding storyline starts with the crash of a human-looking spacecraft played by Eddie Murphy next to the Statue of Liberty (instead of on Ellis Island ala Brother). But we still get the idea that we're dealing with the theme of

America as a melting pot and a land of opportunity.

The rocket, we learn, is being operated by 100 tiny aliens under the command of a captain, also played by Murphy.

He guides the vehicle to Manhattan where the movie morphs into the kind of fish-out-of-water comedy we've seen countless times before, from "Crocodile Dundee" to "Mr. Deeds" to "Elf" to "Enchanted."

This repeatedly recycled scenario revolves around a naive newcomer who must survive a series of ordeals on the mean streets of the city.

At this juncture, the plot thickens when Dave is hit by a car driven by Gina (Elizabeth Banks), a widowed-mom with a heart of gold. When she then brings the odd fellow home to recuperate, her precocious young son, Josh (Austyn Myers), immediately picks up on the fact that their guest isn't normal.

For example, Dave defecates dollar bills and sharpens pencils by sticking them up his nose.

Plus, he can be very literal, such as the occasion on

which he shoved everything to the floor when asked to clear the table.

These eccentricities don't prevent Gina from developing a crush on innocent Dave, which simply cannot be reciprocated since he's a machine after all.

Forget the love story, this is a flick to be savored for its asinine slapstick, the sort of infantile poop and fart fare likely to keep the tykes in stitches for 90 minutes. Besides "Brother from Another Planet," "Meet Dave" shamelessly steals bits made famous by a few other films, such as the "In and Out" coming out scene ("I'm Dave Ming!" instead of "I'm gay!"), and Chris Rock's unsuccessful hail of a taxi from "Down to Earth" ("What, an alien can't get a cab in this town?" instead of "I'm a Black man again!")

All in all, this unoriginal, derivative disaster is the worst sci-fi comedy since, well, since Eddie Murphy made "The Adventures of Pluto Nash."

Poor (0 stars). Rated PG for action, suggestive humor and mild epithets.

Death Row Records sold for \$24 million at auction

NEW YORK (AP) — Death Row Records, the hip-hop label that released seminal gangster rap albums by Tupac Shakur, Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg, has been auctioned for \$24 million.

The New York-based Global Music Group Inc. said in a statement to The Associated Press on Monday that on June 24 it purchased Death Row, including its enviable

back catalog and current artist contracts.

The purchase concluded the roller-coaster saga of one of hip-hop's most famous labels. Under owner Marion "Suge" Knight, Death Row sold tens of millions of albums in the heyday of early '90s rap — its artists often flashing the spoils of the high life in music videos — before collapsing in debt and mis-

management.

A former couple, Lydia and Michael Harris, claimed they helped found the label, and won a judgment of \$107 million, which they tried to collect in 2006. Unable to pay, Death Row and Knight filed for bankruptcy in April 2006, claiming debts of more than \$100 million.

In 2006, a federal judge (See Death Row, Page 10)



THE GOOD LYFE

Sentinel-Voice photos by Marty Frierson

Lyfe Jennings made a brief appearance Saturday night at the Ice House. He's pictured with KCEP FM 88.1 radio personality Carlaya, "The queen of flow." Lyfe Jennings, a hip-hop inspired R&B artist, performed earlier that evening at the House of Blues.

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