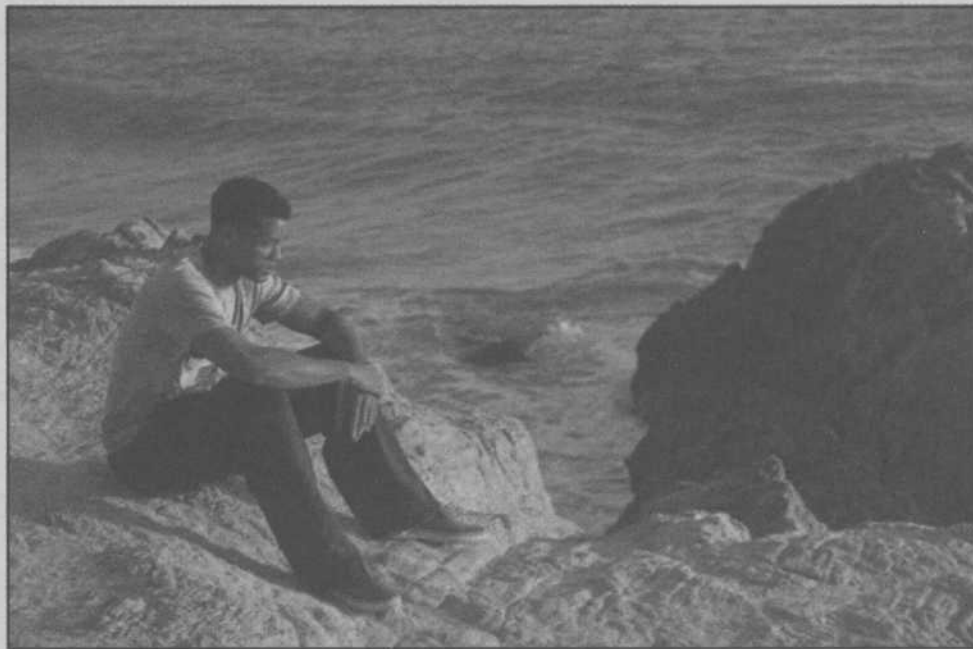


# Puny plot nags at 'Seven Pounds'

By Kam Williams  
Sentinel-Voice

Christmas is the perfect time to release a relentlessly-depressing drama about a suicidal widower wracked with guilt over killing his wife in a car accident in which he was fiddling with his Blackberry while driving. Not. But what's to worry, when you're Will Smith, and your last eight movies have opened up at No. 1 in the box-office and grossed over \$100 million apiece. That must have been the thinking behind foisting "Seven Pounds" on the unsuspecting public at the height of the holiday season.



In "Seven Pounds," superstar Will Smith mines his emotional depths to play the lead role.

The picture plays like a variation of "The Millionaire," if you're old enough to remember that classic TV series about a reclusive philanthropist who, with the help of his loyal manservant, Mr. Anthony, gave away a fortune each week to a needy stranger, anonymously. Here, we have a rocket scientist, Ben Thomas (Smith), passing himself off as an IRS agent to perform seven random acts of kindness as a sort of penance. He still plans to take his own life anyway, because he's eager to join his dearly-departed spouse in the

great beyond. The only reason this transparent film takes two hours instead of two minutes is that Ben must go to great lengths to make sure his beneficiaries are worthy of his blessing. Another fly in the ointment is the seemingly-inappropriate romance which unexpectedly blossoms between him and Emily (Rosario Dawson), the sexiest, terminal heart patient in the history of cinema. Among the other charity cases are Ezra (Woody Harrelson), a blind

telemarketer who keeps his cool when Ben berates him; Connie (Elpidia Camillo), a battered woman too afraid of her violent boyfriend's outbursts to leave or press charges; Nicholas (Quintin Kelley), a sickly kid in need of a bone marrow transplant; Holly (Judyann Elder), a social worker with cirrhosis of the liver, etcetera. You get the idea.

And you don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out how St. Ben will earn his angel's wings. Consequently, your job is just to sit there and

let yourself be manipulated by a syrupy tearjerker that might be well-meaning but drags on long enough to infuriate before the predictable warm and fuzzy moments finally arrive.

Surprisingly superficial for a sentimental message movie laden with schmaltz and mood muzak. Little more than a feature-length public service announcement on the dangers of text-messaging while driving.

Fair (1 star). Rated PG-13 for mature themes, sensuality and disturbing content.

## TV

(Continued from Page 6)

CW declined comment on the report, as did ABC, NBC and FOX.

CBS received a request for comment but did not immediately respond.

On the heels of the 1999-2000 fall lineup of new shows that lacked any minority actors in lead roles — then-NAACP head Kweisi

Mfume called it a "virtual Whiteout" — the NAACP and Asian-American, Hispanic and Indian civil rights groups formed a coalition to lobby networks.

Broadcasters agreed to create minority recruitment and training programs and to chart minority hiring among actors, writers, directors and managers.

The coalition groups have charted their progress with annual reports, although the NAACP has not always participated, often finding sharp underrepresentation of minorities in front of and behind the camera.

The four major broadcast networks have made "important strides" in increasing diversity, the new NAACP re-

port said, including filling lead roles with actors such as Haysbert, starring in CBS' "The Unit," and Laurence Fishburne, now on CBS' "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation."

However, using figures compiled by the networks and industry guilds, the NAACP found a less rosy picture overall.



## MUSIC FOR THE SOUL & THE SENSES

Singer, guitarist, songwriter and record producer Lou Ragland, left, rocks the house during a free holiday concert at the West Las Vegas Arts Center on Saturday. As a member of The Vegas Tenors, Latif Shadi, who's also a former member of Zola Taylor's Platters as well as a founding member, still knows how to get women's palms sweaty.

Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

## Bits 'n' Pieces

### Oprah Winfrey again seeks to involve nation in her weight loss struggle

(TMS) Despite celebrated personal weight-loss successes broadcast over her nationally televised talk-show, Oprah Winfrey has recently ballooned to over 200 pounds and she is once again asking the public to help her drop the pounds. In a press statement, Winfrey admitted she was tired of constantly battling the bulge saying, "I'm mad at myself. I look at my thinner self and think 'How did I let this happen again?'" Winfrey is scheduled to address the issue on her January 5th show kicking off her "Best Life Week."

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### Rapper Lil Wayne accused of copyright infringement



Lil Wayne

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Lawyers for rapper Lil Wayne are seeking more time to turn over documents in response to a lawsuit that accuses the award-winning recording artist of copyright infringement. A federal lawsuit filed in May claims Lil Wayne didn't have permission to sample a song by singer Karma-Ann Swanepoel. The suit says Lil Wayne's record label, Cash Money Records, tried but failed to negotiate a license to use Swanepoel's song "Once" before millions of people downloaded the rapper's song "I Feel Like Dying." A court filing by Lil Wayne's attorneys asks a judge in New Orleans to extend the deadline for turning over documents requested by lawyers for the company that published Swanepoel's song.

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### Jay-Z, Mary J. Blige accused of beat burglary

Mary J. Blige and Jay-Z are among the targets of a federal song-swiping suit by two New Jersey men. Jermaine Jumps and Michael C. Adams accuse Blige's renowned producer, Rodney "Darkchild" Jerkins of swiping the beat from their "On My Grind" for the Blige's "Enough Cryin'." The plaintiffs Jay-Z and Mary J. Blige claims they submitted a CD containing their song to Jerkins back in 2001 and were shocked when "Enough Cryin'" surfaced on 2005 album The Breakthrough. Jay-Z got a cowriting credit. No word why it took three years to file their suit. Calls to their lawyer were not immediately returned. Neither Blige or Jigga are commenting yet. The two pals are frequent collaborators, most recently teaming up last spring for their Heart of the City tour.

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### Soulja Boy apologizes for his potty mouth

NEW YORK (AP) - Soulja Boy Tell 'Em is telling parents he's sorry for his vulgar words. The 18-year-old rapper became a sensation and started a dance craze last year with his Grammy-nominated hit "Crank That (Soulja Boy)." Some of the language and subject matter in that hit was risqué, and on some of his YouTube videos, he's used some naughty words. Soulja Boy apologized to parents and says he is going to try harder to set a positive example for his young fans. Though Soulja Boy apologizes for his public behavior, he's not quite ready to become the ideal role model for kids. "I wouldn't say a role model because I think parents or a guardian should be a kid's main role model, but from now on, I'm going to make sure that every kid that looks up to me will get a positive image that the kids and parents can trust," he said. Soula Boy just released his new CD, "iSouljaBoyTellem," this week.



Soulja Boy