

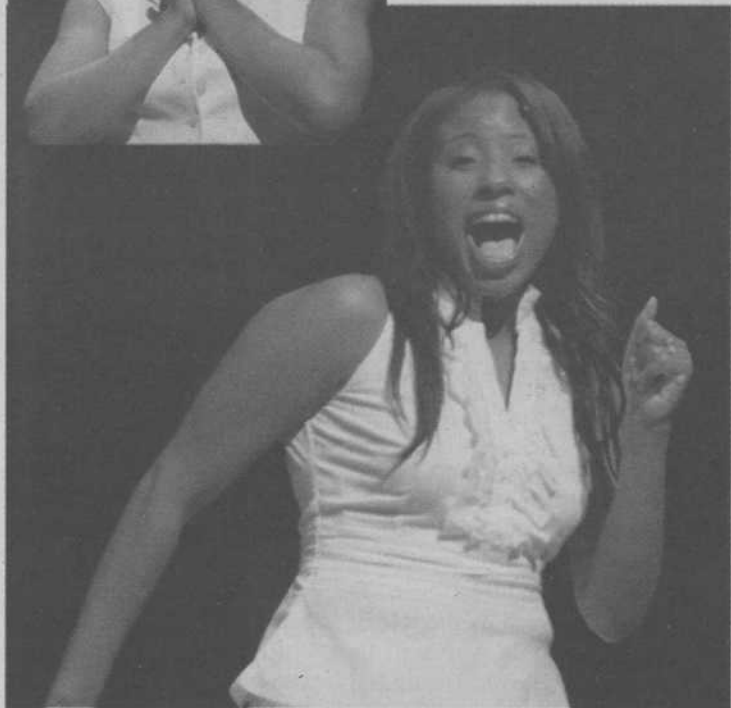
'Our Voice' imitates life

Our Voice, is an ensemble of Black women who perform in song as they journeyed through African American history. The four veterans of Broadway and the Las Vegas strip showcased their celebration of Black women in music at the West Las Vegas Library Theatre and the Summerlin Library and Performing Arts Center during Kwanzaa.



Joel Rene, left, Alan Simone, above

Photos by Ramon Savoy



Nicole Pryor



Nadine Roden

Eastwood melodrama lacks gravity

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

Recently-widowed Walt Kowalski (Clint Eastwood) has a big set of gonads for a grizzled geezer who's the last White guy still living in a Detroit 'hood overrun with Asians, Latinos and Blacks.

After all, he's in mourning and emotionally estranged from his sons, Mitch (Brian Haley) and Steve (Brian Howe), who would like to relocate their dad to a retirement community.

Nonetheless, Walt wants to remain in the rapidly changing, increasingly lawless community.

But rather than make the acquaintance of any of his neighbors, the gun-toting Korean War vet would rather roam around town like a ge-

riatric "Dirty Harry," daring troublemaking knuckleheads to make his day.

For he loves to talk trash, being especially fond of hurling expletives and ethnic slurs at members of every minority group.

He proves to be particularly imaginative when it comes to epithets for the Hmong family who moved in next-door, referring to them as everything from "gooks" to "zipperheads" to "rice niggers" to "chinks" to "nips" to "eggrolls" to "barbarians" to "fish heads" to "swamp rats" to "slope heads."

A friendly female (Ahney Her) invites him over in spite of all the insults, making a peace offering by saying, "I wish our father had been

more like you." Who knows why? Yet, the creepy bigot coarsely responds to the compliment with, "Get me another beer, dragon lady."

Needless to say, Walt is utterly unlikable, at least until the fateful day that a budding juvenile delinquent (Bee Vang) tries to steal his Gran Torino muscle car as part of a gang initiation.

Instead of shooting the thief with his trusty M-1 rifle when he catches him in the act, Walt decides to take pity on the kid after learning that the boy is in dire need of intervention.

Unfortunately, the transition Walt then makes from racist misanthrope into an altruistic father figure focused on his Asian-American protégé as a pet reclamation

project is simply unconvincing.

That's not good news for this Motor City melodrama, since it specifically relies upon the chemistry supposedly generated as a friendship is forged between the pair.

"Gran Torino" is recommended only if you want to see Clint Eastwood uttering a profusion of offensive and profane language, like a senile old coot suffering from adult onset Tourette's Syndrome.

Otherwise, this cross of "8-Mile" and "Death Wish" looks terribly dated, like the desperate last gasp of pre-Obama Era intolerance.

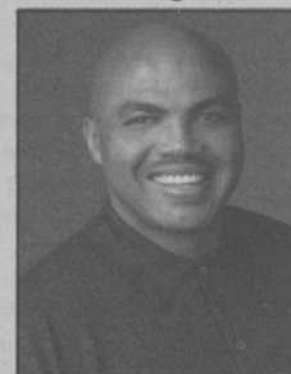
Fair (1 star). Rated R for pervasive profanity, ethnic slurs and violence.

Bits 'n' Pieces

TAYLOR MEDIA SERVICES

Former basketball star Charles Barkley thanks police for drunk driving arrest

Former basketball star Charles Barkley was arrested in Scottsdale, Arizona last week for allegedly driving under the influence (DUI) of alcohol. But instead of contesting his arrest, the 45-year-old sports commentator praised the police for doing their job. Barkley was caught about 1:30 in the morning by a law enforcement task force which specifically targets drunk driving. He refused to submit to a breath test, but he was given a blood test. He was selected one of the National Basketball Association's (NBA) greatest players in 1996 and was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 2006. Barkley was reportedly drinking heavily with former New York Giants football star Michael Strahan and actor Jaleel White (Urkel) prior being arrested.



Charles Barkley

Obama wants Jennifer Hudson to sing at his inauguration



Jennifer Hudson

Members of President-elect Barack Obama's transition team are reportedly courting singer/actor Jennifer Hudson to perform the "Star Spangled Banner" at his inaugural on January 20. If Hudson agrees, it would be her first performance since her mother, brother and nephew were killed last October in Chicago. Hudson sang the national anthem at the Democratic Party's convention in Denver last August. She is from Chicago and has been a long-time Obama supporter.

Well known Black conservative loses job on Los Angeles radio station

One of the media's most prominent Black conservative commentators is off the air. Larry Elder announced last week he was doing his last show after 15 years on Los Angeles radio station KABC. Elder is often used by major media outlets, including cable television news, to counter dominant African-American views on major issues. The exact reasons for Elder's departure from KABC were not given. Elder would only say "I am looking forward to other opportunities ahead of me."



Larry Elder

Basketball star Dwayne Wade gives a home to family hit by fire



Dwayne Wade

A South Florida family whose home was recently destroyed by fire was given the keys to a new home during the holiday season by Miami Heat basketball star Dwyane Wade. In addition to the house, Wade presented the family of Dawn Smith with furnishings, clothing and gifts. The basketball star's Wade's World Foundation will make all mortgage payments on the home until the Smith family is able to get back on its feet financially.
