



Movie Reviews

The Show

By Susan Wloszczyna, USA TODAY

About a decade ago, Run-DMC was chanting rhymes about sneakers. Compared to today's gangsta acts like Snoop Doggy Dogg, whose profanity and violent imagery rattle the cages of Congress, those old-school rappers are as quaint as Mother Goose.

Both acts show up in *The Show* (** out of four), a rapumentary that couldn't be more timely. Neither condemnation nor apology, it's a must for fans and anyone wondering about these supposed corrupters of youth. Grainy and tinny, it still exudes an infectious, raw energy and allows the performers to speak for themselves.

The camera hip-hops about from studio to limo to hotel. In between is black-and-white footage of a concert heavy on groups associated with Russell Simmons, the Berry Gordy of rap. A telling image: the menacing Wu-Tang Clan showering the audience with champagne.

The Show doesn't shrug off the pitfalls of success. It opens with Simmons visiting a contrite Slick Rick at Riker's Island, where the rapper is serving time for attempted second-degree murder. But many exhibit positive virtues. Simmons still has a lot of street in him (he can't help but call women "bitches"), but he talks sense about the ugly side of the biz. Dr. Dre, who has had his own brushes with the law, is quite erudite. Members of Naughty by Nature refuse to forget their roots.

Baby-faced Warren G cleans his own tour bus. Humor is rampant, especially whenever fleshy mound of sound the Notorious B.I.G. is around. It's priceless when his mom hauls out his baby picture. (R: drug use, profanity)

Dead Presidents

By Mike Clark, USA TODAY

Older, maybe wiser, but hardly wizened, twins Allen and Albert Hughes are back two years after *Menace II Society* with their 23-year-old muscles re-flexed. Messy but mesmerizing, *Dead Presidents* (** out of four) has a crowded agenda, an epically ambitious Bronx-Vietnam-Bronx trajectory, and at least one of the year's great movie scenes.

With its '60s setting and incendiary title, one might expect a political assassination tract. In truth, *Dead Presidents* alludes to currency in an armored truck, the kind that's knocked off during the movie's payoff (in both senses). A run-down of the heist participants hints at the intended scope of the story: one veteran Bronx lowlife, one female Black Power activist and four messed-up Vietnam buddies.

Specifically, Michael Henry Brown's script follows the downfall of a middle-class black youth from a straight-arrow family: petty crime, out-of-wedlock fatherhood, a violent tour in the Marines and no glory back home. Scene for scene, the movie is powerful and accomplished, but we never fully grasp why an agreeable kid (Society's Larenz Tate) so automatically rejects his family's values, or why

someone who wants to call his own shots enlists when college is an option. Connective tissue is not a Hughes Brothers strength.

And yet, they have a lot more on their minds than their more dazzling Coen counterparts (*Raising Arizona*), and only a little less craft. Presidents' mosaic approach does have a cumulative emotional effect - more so at the end than in its unprecedentedly graphic Vietnam scenes.

If the Brothers haven't foiled the sophomore jinx, they've dodged it. (New York and L.A.; R: violence, profanity, sexual content)

Clockers

by Kelly Moore

First off, for those that don't know, and are not from New York, "clockers" are hustlers and I have two words to describe *Clockers*, the movie: "cold blast!" To my pleasant surprise, this

was a great "Spike Lee Joint." One thing that was unusual about this Spike Lee movie was his choice of actors. The cast

included all "no-names," or actors that haven't proved themselves.

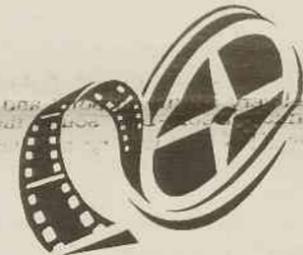
The picture started with a gross realization of our time; the frightening number of African-Americans being killed by handguns. Lee opened the picture by showing photos of these atrocities. *Clockers* depicts a young black male in his twenties suffering through the hardships and temptations of the ghetto. His mother and father are not around, so his only parents are the streets. The person that he looks up to is a drug king pin in New York. So to please his boss, the young man,

known as "Stripe" (Melvin Phifer), shoots a person.

Through the course of the movie, Stripe has many confrontations with New York City's finest, "homo-cide," and of course Lee touches on some of the cops' racist attitudes.

In all of Spike Lee's movies, he always has to have a cameo, so you shouldn't expect anything less from *Clockers*. In the past, I have criticized Spike's camera angles, but I must say Spike has come a long way. Of course he always has to have the camera angle where it appears someone is walking faster than the camera (which has the same effect as being on an escalator). I was particularly impressed with how he used the camera angle to produce a mirror image in an eye ball (it sounds strange, but you've got to see the movie to know what I'm talking about). Spike Lee is truly a genius of camera angles.

The only problem that I have with this movie is that it was too long. I don't know why Spike has to go for the movie marathon award. Overall I did enjoy the movie, though, and it was true to urban life. Many movies only show the guns and drugs and not the whole urban life. Thanks Spike for once again keeping it real.



I have two words to describe *Clockers*, the movie: "cold blast!"

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