

5B ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Virginia City gets make over by Montanans. See story page 7C.

College has '39 mural of La Amistad

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TALLADEGA, Ala. — Steven Spielberg's "Amistad" may be based on a little-known historic event for many, but for Talladega College students the story is very familiar.

Since 1939, a mural depicting the 1839 mutiny of African slaves aboard the Spanish ship La Amistad has been displayed proudly in the lobby of the school's Savery Library.

In bold, vibrant colors, the three-paneled mural by famed artist Hale Woodruff has reigned as a living history lesson for students and visitors who have passed through the small, historically black institution in Talladega.

"We take all of our incoming freshman to the library and show them the murals and tell them the story of the Amistad," said Library Director Frances Dates, who first learned of the story 21 years ago when she was a freshman at the school.

"They learn more about it during the year in their freshman orientation classes. We think it's important that they know their history. Our philosophy is that if you don't know where you come from, you can't know where you're going."

The film and mural both tell the story of the 53 Africans abducted from West Africa. Shackled together inside 48-inch high cubicles, on June 28, 1839 the Africans were placed aboard the Spanish vessel, La Amistad (which means friendship) to be sold as slaves in Havana.

After three days, the Africans, led by Sengbe Pieh (whom the Spaniards referred to as "Cinque"), revolted and ordered the two surviving Cubans to turn the ship back to Africa. Each night the Cubans reversed the direction of the ship and two months later the ship docked in Long Island.

There the Africans were transported to New Haven, Conn., jailed and charged with piracy and murder. With the help of former U.S. President John Quincy Adams, the mutineers were eventually acquitted in a U.S. court case and later raised money to return to their homeland.

Once proclaimed by NAACP founder W.E.B. DuBois as the most important work done by a black artist, the mural by Woodruff includes detailed and factual accounts of the incident.

The first scene features Africans holding shiny sabers to the throats of their horrified captors. Scene two shows the shackled Africans huddled in a corner of a courtroom with one of the Spaniards pointing a guilty finger toward Sengbe. The third scene depicts a celebration as the Africans returned to their homeland.

Southerners get shut out of 'Amistad'

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAFAYETTE, La. — Filmmaker Steven Spielberg wanted to tell the world the little-known story of an 1839 uprising by African captives on a Spanish slave ship in the recently released movie, "Amistad."

But for now, the movie-going public in some southern cities, like Lafayette, have been shut out of seeing the epic. The movie, which opened in 350 theaters nationwide, has very limited distribution through the South.

"Amistad" did not open in Lafayette and is not scheduled to arrive until Jan. 16 when it will run in an exclusive engagement at the Ambassador 10 Theater more than a month

after the film was first released.

Currently, it is playing in just three theaters in Louisiana — one in Baton Rouge and two in New Orleans.

The rest of the South does not fare much better.

"Amistad" opened in Birmingham, Ala., and Atlanta, but not in Arkansas, Mississippi or South Carolina.

In all, the movie opened in 19 cities the company considers "the South," a Dreamworks SKG spokesman told The Daily Advertiser after the newspaper asked about its relative southern absence. Ten of those cities are in Texas and Florida.

"We're talking about our history here and it is an absolute disgrace we are not being given

the opportunity to see this film now," said Bernard Broussard of the Lafayette chapter of the NAACP.

Dreamworks spokesman Donald Harris defended the company's decision to open in limited release. By Christmas, he expected "Amistad" would be showing on 700 screens nationwide.

"And when we hit 700 theaters, the representation for the South will be on par with all areas of the country," Harris said. "We are not trying to keep this movie from anybody, we are just trying to build an audience. You do that with platform releases so you can get word of mouth going and create an enthusiasm for the film."

John Bess, a Lafayette resi-

dent, doesn't buy that argument.

"That just doesn't ring true to me at all," he said. "You have Spielberg and a great episode in history. It's a movie everyone is talking about already. I think there is a more patrician take on this whole thing."

"I think there is a feeling among distributors and movie theaters that the public shouldn't be stirred up by the racial issues in this film.... The distributors fear the African-American population will be aroused by this movie and they fear the white moviegoer will be afraid to go because of possible violence. Or even worse, they are afraid the white popu-

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Jazz great dies

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PHILADELPHIA — The soft, warm tone and spare style of Johnny Coles' jazz trumpet will sound only on his albums now.

The 71-year-old Philadelphia resident, who played with many of the biggest names in jazz and for royalty, died of cancer Sunday at Allegheny University Hospitals-Hahnemann.

"He walked with giants, so I consider him a giant," said renowned bassist Jimmy Heath, a Philadelphia native who had known Coles, a Trenton, N.J., native, since childhood. He said Coles' sound quality and improvisational style placed him among the greats.

"He was an individual, and that's something very hard to be in a world of copycats," Heath said.

Said Michael Ray, a trumpeter who studied Coles' work: "He was hip before hip was hip, a real smooth cat. He was a real solo stylist. When you talk about 'The Warm Sound,' that title was so appropriate. It was the perfect title for the way he approached life."

Coles, who shared his birth year, 1926, with Miles Davis and John Coltrane, was equally comfortable on trumpet and the larger-bore, softer-toned flugelhorn.

He recorded fewer than a dozen records as a band leader — "The Warm Sound of Johnny Coles" and "Little Johnny C" were show-cases but played on scores of albums for many jazz legends, including Duke Ellington and Herbie Hancock.

Coles started playing at about 10 after begging his mother for a trumpet. He tried to quit when practice interfered with the time he spent outdoors with friends, Coles once recalled, but a whipping from his mother kept a horn in his hands.

The trumpeter was mostly self-taught, although he attended the Mastbaum Vocational School of Music in Philadelphia.

He played in Army bands during and after World War II, and later worked with rock-and-roll and blues bands. After his most prolific periods in the 1960s, he played with Ellington and Count Basie and had gigs with many groups as a contract musician.

He also played with Ray Charles and Quincy Jones, and performed for the royal families of Ethiopia, Thailand and Britain.

He returned to Philadelphia in 1989 after stints in Newark, N.J., Richmond, Va., and the San Francisco area.

Coles realized he was not as well-known as the stars with whom he played.

"My name is definitely not a household word. Among jazz buffs, yes. But I'm gonna make it a household word," he told a California newspaper in 1986.

'Jackie Brown' debuts at No. 4



PHOTO/MIRAMAX

Pam Grier in the lead role in Quentin Tarantino's Jackie Brown. The film opened at No. 4 and grossed nearly \$13 million.

By Jeff Wilson
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — Director James Cameron's "Titanic" is proving unsinkable at the box office.

Cameron's epic about the historic liner that sunk on its maiden voyage earned \$35.6 million to set a three-day December box office record and retain the No. 1 position, far ahead of "Tomorrow Never Dies," according to studio estimates Sunday.

The \$200 million epic, the most expensive movie ever made, eclipsed the \$33 million set by this month's debut of "Scream 2." The horror sequel, which still holds the record for a December opening, dipped to sixth place.

"Tomorrow Never Dies," the latest James Bond

adventure, earned \$21 million.

Among new films, the Jack Nicholson comedy "As Good As It Gets" was a winner at third place with \$12.5 million in ticket sales, while "The Postman" and "Jackie Brown" opened weakly.

"Titanic" already has taken in \$87 million and will likely pass the \$100 million mark by Friday, said Robert Bucksbaum, president of the film industry newsletter Reel Source.

Ticket sales were up 23 percent in its second week and the average take at 2,711 locations was \$12,900, considered extremely high.

The figures were even more impressive because the 3-hour, 14-minute running time allowed theaters only a limited number of showings. The PG-13 rating also helped during a weekend

when family audiences were the norm.

"Titanic" is getting a lot of repeat business. It's just that good of a film," Bucksbaum said. "A lot of people felt it would have a lot of trouble getting its money back."

"Titanic" earlier had the biggest-ever Christmas Day take with \$9.2 million, eclipsing the \$6 million earned by "Godfather III" in 1990.

DreamWorks SKG also scored big with an audience surge for the movies "MouseHunt" — up 65 percent over its debut weekend — and "Amistad," up 55 percent from its previous weekend.

Among new films, TriStar's "As Good As It Gets" did the best, placing No. 3. The romantic comedy earned \$12.5 million at 1,572 locations for a \$7,952 per-loc-

ation average.

Ed Russell, spokesman for Columbia/TriStar, expressed satisfaction that "As Good As It Gets" beat the seven other films that opened last week. "It is very encouraging that a well-written, well-acted and well-directed film did so well," he said.

The new Quentin Tarantino film "Jackie Brown" debuted at No. 5 with \$8.8 million and "An American Werewolf in Paris" was seventh with \$7.8 million. "Mr. Magoo," the Leslie Nielsen comedy based on the nearsighted cartoon character, debuted in ninth place with \$5.5 million.

The most significant disaster was "The Postman," with Kevin Costner as star, director and producer. The poorly reviewed epic about a post-apocalyptic mail carrier cost

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Sounds

'Jackie Brown' is rich in '70s soundscape



Sounds

Winfred B. Cross



Various Artists
Jackie Brown: Music from the Miramax Film
Quentin Tarantino & Lawrence Bender, executive producers
Maverick/A Band Apart/Warner Bros.

☆☆ 1/2

Quentin Tarantino's "Jackie Brown" may be a bit long for some viewers, but it ain't boring.

There's some fine acting and music, which I think he hand-picked. It's a '70s looking film, so there's a bunch of '70s music. Bobby Womack's "Across 110th Street" opens and closes the movie, which is a little odd considering it is the theme song for a movie of the same name. Still, it's a riveting piece to use, one of Womack's best songs. Bill Withers' "Who Is He (And What Is He To You)" has seen a lot of mileage by other singers, but his original version is still the best. Bloodstone's "Natural High" and the Delfonic's "Didn't I Blow Your Mind This Time" still stand as two of the best ballads from the '70s.

There are a few times when this

soundtrack slips. The inclusion of the over-used Foxy Brown is a disappointment.

"(Holy Matrimony) Letter To The Firm" is about as dismal as anything else she's done. Pam Grier's "Long Time Woman" fits the '70s motif but she's not the best singer. And The Vampire Sound Machine, Inc.'s "The Lions And The Cucumber" is, well, bizarre.

Still, there's enough here to satisfy anyone looking for good '70s stuff.

☆☆ 1/2

Ice Cube has been busy producing and acting, so his own recording career has been on hold. Frankly, I think he's a more intriguing actor than rapper.

His latest is a compilation of stuff he's done with other people. There's a new tune called "Bend A Corner Wit Me," featuring KHOP, which is just OK. I do like "Bop Gun (One Nation)" but the rest of this stuff leaves me wishing Cube would clean up his language and act.

Bobby Brown
Forever
Bobby Brown, Tim Brown & Jeff Redd, executive producers
MCA

Bobby Brown's career has been on a steady decline since he hit a peak with his phenomenal **Don't Be Cruel** CD. His latest CD **Forever**, doesn't come close to his best work but it isn't bad. There are no jams like "Don't Be Cruel," "My Prerogative" or even "Get Away." But some of the ballads show some vocal growth. "She's All I Need," dedicated to his wife Whitney, is actually the best thing he's ever sang. Still, the fire's not completely out, but it's close.

Rating: ☆☆☆☆ Classic; ☆☆☆ Excellent; ☆☆☆ Good; ☆☆☆ Fair; ☆ Why?; No Stars — A mess