

★ In the Spotlight ★

Soulman - A Comedy?



(L-R) Mark Watson (C. Thomas) and Gordon Bloomfield (Ayre Gross) scout the Harvard Law School catalogue looking for scholarships for which Mark might qualify.

I went to see this movie expecting to really hate it. I mean, come on now — a white man trying to portray a black to gain entry into Harvard's Law School! I expected to run into stereotypes left and right, where there should have been none.

Soulman, produced by Steve Tisch and directed by Steve Miner, deals with

the college experience of a student who, in his attempt to look black, runs into racial violence, slurs, and more problems than he bargained for.

Thomas Howell plays the perpetrator, and Rae Dawn Chung stars as Sara 'Alice Walker,' a struggling black Harvard law student that Watson falls in love with. James Earl Jones plays as the law professor.

Well — there were a lot of stereotypes. But I don't think the movie could have brought the point across without using them. And the point was that even if a white person were to accurately portray a black person and get away with it, he could only obtain a limited experience of what it feels like to be black. It's a totally different ordeal when you can't just step out of the role as Marc Watson did.

It's different because a white person could not know beforehand what it feels like to have under your belt, two hundred years of oppression and still further prejudice and discrimination.

I question whether the movie should be regarded as a true comedy due to the seriousness of its underlying point.

"Soulman" granted much of the audience with an overexaggerated, yet important look at a predominantly white university — in this age, the prestigious institution of Harvard University.

The movie also hits a serious spot when it introduces an interracial relationship into its plot.

However, its forte is its humor, which exists throughout the movie.



They discovered the Henry Q. Bouchard scholarship — but it's for a black applicant.

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When critiquing a movie, one must look at the negative aspects as well. The plot of the movie really could have been more tightly structured, especially when you have two white guys in the movie continually showing up wherever Marc Watson was, to crack jokes about black people.

And then later in the movie, Watson is thrown in jail for no other reason than the color of his skin. And he is beat up by a group of white men because they lost a baseball game to a "nigger team."

After the movie was over, I spoke with a few members of the audience to get their impression of Watson. The audience seemed to be more disturbed about the appearance of the main character than they were concerned about the role the character played.

The overall view was that he did not look black because he had no black facial features — not many blacks have straight noses and pink lips. In fact, concerning Watson's color, he looked dark green or olive instead of brown or dark brown.

Overall, I like *Soulman*. It's humor wins out over its overbearing stereotyping. I would suggest to anyone to go see it.

Vandross "Gives Us the Reason"

For those of you who are getting tired of the rapping, scratching, synthesized music that blitzes the radio today, take comfort in the fact that the versatile, soft-voiced, smooth-sounding Luther Vandross has released yet another outstanding album.

Give Me the Reason, is a package of Vandross' well-liked ballads, as well as some finely produced upbeat tunes.

The title song, *Give Me the Reason*, is among the upbeat tunes of the album and cherished success earlier in the year with appearances on the soul and pop charts.

This fast-paced tune was the soundtrack for the movie *Ruthless People* starring Bette Midler.

The best surprise of the album can be credited to the presence of another smooth-sounding vocalist who is ordinarily know as a dancer. Gregory Hines teams up with Vandross for a clean-sounding, soft tune. The two harmonize surprisingly well.

No doubt that this release will be enjoyed by the many Vandross fans that swooned to the soft tunes of Vandross' other releases.

The song from the album that is presently released is called *Stop the Love*. It is an upbeat tune in which the singer begs for his working lady to return home to "celebrate the love we got." It has a slightly heavier beat than does the title cut. This too will be another hit for Vandross.

The career of this celebrated vocalist dates back to his experiences in a workshop which took place in the famed Apollo Theater in New York.

Here Vandross was a member of the workshop *Listen My Brother*, where talented artists were taught to improve their artistic abilities.

Vandross was born in New York City's eastern side and grew up in the Bronx in the late 1960's.

Since then his career has included singing background to David Bowie, Bette Midler, Chaka Khan and the Average White Band.

Vandross was finally lucky enough to get a break and go out on his own. Since then he has entertained many Rhythm and Blues listeners for several years.

Give Me the Reason contains more of these entertaining tunes and is well-worth investing in.



Luther Vandross (photo by Matthew Rolston © 1986 CBS, Inc.)

Gospelfest '86 Displays Wide Area Talent

So many choirs. So many different, diverse, completely talented choirs, how would anyone attempt to judge who was "best"? Special Guest Shirley Caesar said it best when she said, "This is not a night for choirs to outdo each other, but all glory goes to God."

This simple sentence served to set the tone for Carolina Gospelfest '86, a celebration of Gospel music of the Carolina region on November 15. And what a celebration it was! From High Point's Memorial United Methodist Inspirational Choir and its 24 members to Eden's Southern Western District Choir

and its 100+ from Fayetteville's Williams Chapel Youth Choir and its eight-year-old soloists to the Family Fellowship Mass Choir from Raeford, completely composed of descendants from the Purcell clan, no choir held back on this night to remember. If you like gospel music, if you like music at all, "You shoulda been there," as stated by WRAL's J.D. Lewis.

For more than three hours, Raleigh Memorial Auditorium was treated to some of the best toe-tapping, hand-clapping, gettin' happy music remembered by much of the audience. Joseph Cherry, who came from Washington, DC for the concert,

said, "This is, without a doubt, the best Gospel music festival I've ever been to."

Altogether, with appearances by Ms. Caesar and the Love Center District Choir, Gospelfest '85 winners, seven choirs competed for the title of Gospelfest '86 Grand prize winners. The BSM Gospel Choir sang fabulously, and received an honorable mention for fourth place. Danny Lytle, choir director was, "...completely satisfied, as the choir worked hard and did much better than we did last year." Ray Wallington, choir president, agreed. "The competition was really tight. Many choirs could have

won," he stated.

The eventual winners were the Family Fellowship Mass Choir, behind the strong lead vocals of Sherry Purcell. Dola Purcell, choir organist and Sherry's mother, said that the excitement was too great for her group, as they had only been formed three months before the competition began. "I give all the glory to God, for it was his work," she exclaimed.

Many thanks were given to the McDonald's corporation for their sponsorship and hard work, and to each of the choirs. And as Kent Brooks, BSM choir pianist said, "There's always next year."