

Entertainment

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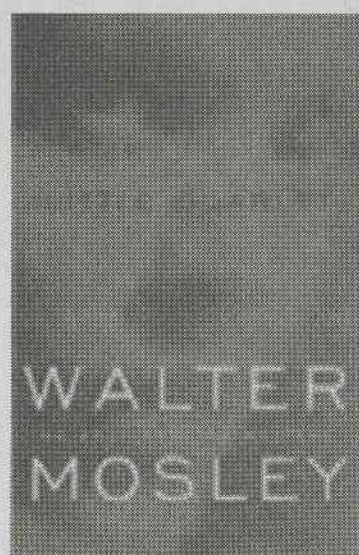
Mosley makes it Easy A Hero is Bourne: Predator puts some Collateral on the Cookout

By Toby Tate
Editor-In-Chief

"Little Scarlet" begins with the end of the '60's race riots in L.A. Described in Mosley's gritty "Mickey Spillane" fashion, the opening line reads: "The morning air smelled of smoke. Wood ash mainly but there was also the acrid stench of burnt plastic and paint. And even though I knew it couldn't be true, I thought I caught a whiff of putrid flesh from under the rubble across the street." Rawlins's first act is to help keep a friend, a Jewish shoe-repair business owner, from getting accosted by an irate black customer who is demanding his merchandise: a pair of shoes which were burned in a fire.

The basic pretense of the Easy Rawlins character is that he is a good guy among mostly not-so-good guys. Rawlins, a custodian for the Sojourner Truth high school and an amateur detective, has a hard time convincing people of this, however, as all through the story he is harassed by the LAPD, mostly for no good reason other than being black and in the "wrong" place at the wrong time.

After helping his friend, the Jewish shop owner, Rawlins is confronted in the shop by Melvin Suggs, a white police detective who eventually becomes a friend. Rawlins is soon riding in a prowl car and heading for the local precinct, unsure of why he is taking this ride. At first, Easy is distrustful of the police, but soon learns that they need to enlist him for both his detective abilities and his skin color. They need him to infiltrate the black community of Watts and find the killer of a young black girl named Scarlet who had been strangled and shot. The killer, they feared, was a white man. But Rawlins



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and Suggs soon discover that this may not be the case.

The characters throughout the story are an eclectic blend to say the least. When Rawlins is injured from a gun shot wound, a woman friend who Easy had once had relations with mixes up healing concoctions and brews that rival anything modern medicine has to offer; his best friend, Mouse, is a man with woman problems who could sweet talk the Tooth Fairy and stare down a rabid Pit Bull; his son, Jesus, is an adopted Mexican boy who drops out of school and loves sailing the open seas; his girlfriend and live-in lover Bonnie, an airline stewardess and a strong female character, always stands beside her man; and many other colorful as well as dark and brooding characters people the pages of this well-written and partially auto-biographical novel.

We are made to experience the very real feelings of what it was like to be black in 1965 L.A. during a time of racial divide and mistrust, the mixed emotions of being a fighter with a heart. Significant historical events such as the speeches of Martin Luther King and the Viet Nam war are frequently mentioned while Easy goes about to find a killer of black women whose motives may go all the way back to childhood.

Though he works for the police, they seem to be bent on catching a killer, whether it's the right one or not. But Easy's motives are pure, and he is tenacious, vowing that justice will be served.

Rawlins also has a time keeping the women at bay, finding himself in situations with young, beautiful girls who throw themselves at him, one even suggesting she would be his "other" girlfriend. But Rawlins is true to the end. Knocking on doors throughout white and black neighborhoods alike, he relentlessly pursues the killer, inadvertently becoming involved in his friend Mouse's illegal money making schemes, going up against a man he wrongly thinks is the murderer, getting beat up, shot, harassed, arrested, lovesick and just downright angry at the murders of black women that is taking place, which has been historically ignored by the LAPD. As we discover, Easy Rawlins is not a man you want to get on the wrong side of.

This book is a throwback to the Raymond Chandler "Big Easy" type detective novel. We feel like we are there, experiencing each event. There is lots of action and romance but a relatively small amount of graphic violence, sex or foul language. The chapters are short, very much like a James Patterson novel. Many such as myself who read Patterson may see similarities between Alex Cross, the main character of several Patterson novels, and Easy Rawlins, but Easy came first in 1990 with "Devil In a Blue Dress." He is also featured in subsequent books, including the recent short story collection, "Six Easy Pieces."

"Little Scarlet", available at Waldenbooks, Borders, Barnes and Noble and Amazon is \$24.95 and is published by Little, Brown and Company.

By Chris Chinaka
Staff Writer

While comparisons to "Crouching Tiger" might be expected, "Hero" is an allegory with its own integrity. This movie is very energetic and it's guaranteed to keep you wondering what's next. You can expect to see some fancy fighting techniques, dangerous stunts and there are even a couple of emotional components to this movie. Unfortunately, it is overdone. Subtleties have been abandoned in much of the fight gymnastics, allowing you to virtually see just how the actors were suspended in space by the digitally deleted cables. The technique is a great addition to the lexicon of fight dynamics on film. For those fascinated with martial arts, The Hero is definitely a collector's item.

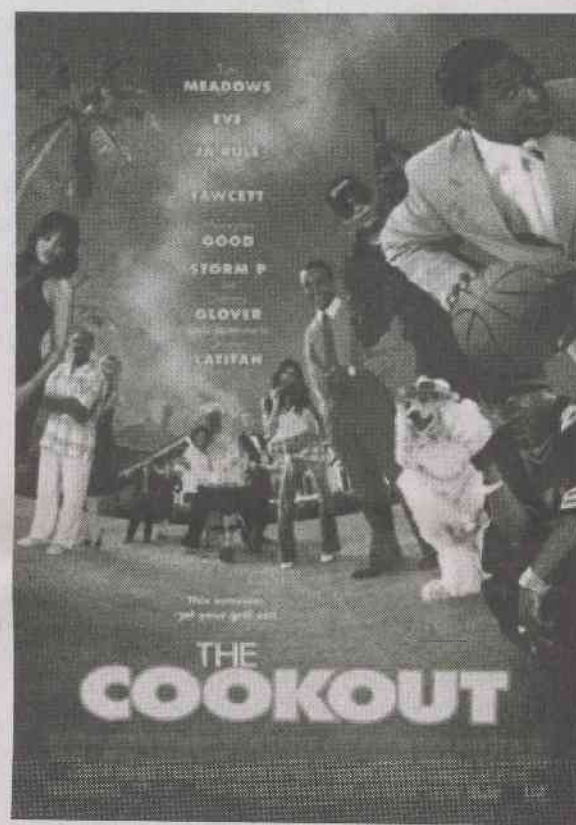
"The Bourne Supremacy" was not just another one of those summer sequels that went bad. It's actually exciting because it was filled with massive action. This movie picked up where the "Bourne Identity" left off and has propelled itself to a summer smash. I really enjoyed this movie; it was very impressive to see how Matt Damon showed growth and a serious side. There are a lot of car crashes, gun fighting, and puzzle solving. Trust me; you will get your moneys worth. Universal Studios Home Video will launch the thriller on DVD sometime close to December, in separate anemographic wide screen and full screen version. Each includes English, French and Spanish Dolby 5.1 surround sound.

"Collateral," the new Tom Cruise movie, is preposterous as well as a

whole lot of fun. How often do you get to see Tom Cruise play a professional assassin? It also stars Jamie Fox and Jada Pinkett Smith. This is one of those movies you have to see. It is one of Cruise's best performances and his smartest career move. The directors waste no time getting into the action. In this movie, the cab driver Jamie Fox picks up Tom Cruise, a hit man with a busy night ahead of him. The two form an uneasy partnership when Cruise forces Fox to drive him around town to the various stops on his

minutes to rattle your brain with lots of suspense then you might enjoy this movie.

On the comedy side, the "Cookout" is about a young African-American male who was drafted number one in the professional basketball league. Todd Anderson (aka Storm P) signs a \$30 million contract with the New Jersey Nets and finds out that his newfound wealth means relationships with the people in his life are bound to change. Anderson moves out of the neighborhood and into a house worthy of a future



murderous tour of Los Angeles. It starts with the cab driver being put in a weird position. There are no boring parts in this movie.

Now, if you are not into science fiction, "Alien Vs. Predator" is not the movie for you. If you are a big fan of either or both of these iconic space invaders, you will love seeing these two creatures beating the dust off each other. This movie starts when discovery is made of an ancient pyramid buried in Antarctica, and a team of scientists is sent on a journey to the frozen continent. If you have 87

basketball superstar. His mother's (Jennifer Lewis) first order of business is to make sure that he does not forget where he came from. Meanwhile, his girlfriend Brittany has other ideas: making sure he forgets the family as fast as possible. So, in order to keep the family balanced, Storm P. decides to have a family cookout, but the cookout turns into a disaster. This movie was written by Queen Latifah and Shakim Compere, and directed by Lance Rivera. The 85-minute comedy was just all right, having its funny as well as confusing parts.

Neptunes' N.E.R.D. hatches its latest CD: Fly or Die

By Toby Tate
Editor-In-Chief

Virginia's favorite production duo, the Grammy winning Neptunes, have brought together an interesting collage of sounds for their band N.E.R.D.'s (No one Ever Really Dies) new album on Virgin Records. This is truly something new and original, a far cry from the Janet Jackson and N*SYNC productions they are famous for.

The latest CD from Pharrell Williams, Chad Hugo and Shae (no last name), titled "Fly or Die," begins with a one chord song (except for the bridge)

called "Don't Worry Bout It." It is a surprisingly catchy funk rock tune, and grows on you with each listening. Most of the songs, like this one, feature a basic three piece band with bass, guitar and drums, and an occasional keyboard. There is little if any sampling on the album; all extra production is done via instrumentation, whether it be fuzz guitar, synthesizer or vocals. The Neptune's mentality on this album must have been "less is more," and it works. Also on this track, Pharrell sings in a Smokey Robinson-esque falsetto which actually adds a retro R&B feel to the song.

Most of the tracks, such as "She Wants to Move" and "Maybe," have a Lenny Kravitz quality to them. In fact, Kravitz himself actually plays guitar on "Maybe." There is also a "Living Color" vibe going on with songs such as "Fly or Die," "Thrasher," "Drill Sergeant" and "Jump," featuring vocals by the band Good "She Wants to

Move" has been voted the #1 track on the band's web site and is featured as a video on the digital channel

"N." From what I can decipher from William's cryptic lyrics, it is about sex. A girl's father is being over-protective and Williams obviously wants him to let her do her thing. "Hey mister, look at your girl, she loves it, I can see it in her eyes." It has a great drum rhythm played

on low toms and is accompanied by a funky bass riff and Sugar Ray-type acoustic guitar.

"Wonderful Place" features the most optimistic lyrics on the album "My soul's in my smile, don't frown, just get up, get up," sung by a chorus of voices, a-la the Four Tops, and backed up by a horn section. The song changes from a mellow whistling of the main melody to a chorus of voices and horns and then back again. It keeps things interesting.

I didn't like the fact that the instruments played by Pharrell, Chad or Shae were not listed anywhere on

the CD, so there's no way to tell who's doing what. I do like the fact the CD is enhanced and you can see some cool slide shows on your computer to go along with the songs. It's also nice that there are both explicit and non-explicit lyric versions available for those with discriminating tastes.

To recap, "Fly or Die" feels like an extremely well-produced garage band, with a sound like a mix between Lenny Kravitz and Living Color. There are also older R&B influences such as Smokey Robinson and the Temptations. Check out the band's web site at www.n-e-r-d.com.

