

'Baadasssss!' a soulful ride

BY PHILIP MCFEE
SUMMER EDITOR

Here's a little-known fact — The Daily Tar Heel gave "Shanghai Knights" four stars.

Yes, this paper awarded four stars to a movie that drew a majority of its momentum from a hackneyed, racially insensitive plot wherein a Chinese sheriff, Chon Wang, goes hunting after a highly valued jewel from his homeland.

But hey, when this review ran, I had no say in the film's star rating. I was a lowly staff writer, the same as the author of the piece in question, whom I respect a great deal.

We all make mistakes. I gave "Cold Mountain" four stars.

The problem is movies that gloss over or even exploit racial issues have pervaded the market. For every "American History X," there's a wave of movies in the "Soul Plane" or "Bringing Down the House" vein.

But there's a way to make all this right. Well, not right, but better. Treating the wounds with a healthy dose of "Baadasssss!" a docudrama detailing the production of the landmark 1971 blaxploitation pic "Sweet Sweetbacks

MOVIE REVIEW

"BADASSSSS!"

★★★★

Baadasssss Song.

It's a story about an exploitation-era Hollywood project and its snags that perfectly captures the empowerment-via-encroachment impetus of '70s underground cinema.

Before there was "Shaft," "Coffy" or the countless others, Melvin Van Peebles, had a dream — to follow up his first film "Watermelon Man" with a movie that detailed what he strived so hard to achieve — getting the Man's foot outta his ass.

In the 21st century, a time where the Man might be null but the vibes aren't crystal, Melvin's son Mario tells the story of his father's production. His intense focus is spot-on, down to adopting the Sweetback role as his father once did. While the lead casts the trademark Van Peebles stare over a throwback soundtrack, Melvin's diverse cast captures the independent microcosm that spawned the feature.

The off-the-screen L.A. of the 1970s felt the surge of civil unrest



COURTESY OF SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

The strong-willed Mario Van Peebles, channeling his father Melvin, sets up the money shot in the soul-filled period docudrama "Baadasssss!"

that hadn't graced the silver screen, and seeing the rise of a minority voice into the Hollywood ranks is a success story that stirs feelings unlike any other 2004 cinematic offering. With hope, the film will have a double impact, gaining merit for itself while also turning viewers back to earlier works by black filmmakers such as Gordon Parks' "The Learning Tree."

And, as should happen, the renewed appreciation for the classics should erode the credibility of the already-laughable current fare that hardly could be considered portrayals of average life.

"Baadasssss!" — like Sweetback — could go revolutionary.

Ultimately, the film belongs to an exclusive bunch, which could

include only it and the 2002 sci-fi sleeper "Junk." Like a perfect square trinomial, it keeps a delicate balance of apt content and a fitting title.

It's an experience that's as affirming as it is inspiring, and — as you know — it's straight baadasssss.

Contact the A&E Editor at artsdesk@unc.edu.

STARSYSTEM

- ★ POOR
- ★★ FAIR
- ★★★ GOOD
- ★★★★ EXCELLENT
- ★★★★★ CLASSIC

MCSWAIN

FROM PAGE 3

consulted to keep spirits up.

But in December 2002, McSwain was diagnosed with a potentially fatal case of colon cancer and underwent chemotherapy treatment.

Despite the diagnosis, McSwain continued to perform her duties as academic counselor. By March of this year, however, her condition had worsened, forcing her into the hospital.

Finally, early Friday morning, her battle ended.

"I'm so sad," said rising senior Jackie Manuel in a statement. "She helped us out a whole lot my freshman year, with much more than just academics. She helped Jawad (Williams), Melvin (Scott) and me work through some tough

times that year and was like my second mom. I'm really going to miss her."

The Burgess McSwain fund, has been established in her honor. Contributions may be made in care of the UNC Department of Geography, Saunders Hall, Campus Box 3220, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27599-3220.

McSwain is survived by her father, Daniel Murphy, 87, of Chapel Hill.

Guthridge said that while her position will be replaced with someone else, nobody will ever really achieve the same relationship with her students.

"She was not married," Guthridge said. "This was her family."

Contact the Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.

DOWNTOWN

FROM PAGE 3

the new entity to be aware of the types of programs we have done in the past when we were funded," he said.

House said the downtown commission would like to act in the capacity of an advisor to the new group if asked to do so, drawing on its experiences with successful programs in the past.

The commission sponsored parades, organized the Carolina Concert Series and oversaw the creation of murals in downtown Chapel Hill.

Whereas the downtown commission dealt more with promoting and marketing downtown Chapel Hill through the events listed, the new group will be broader in scope by incorporating Chapel Hill citizens' concerns, said Aaron Nelson, executive director of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of

Commerce.

The new group consists of two at-large seats, two property owners and two University-appointed seats.

Nancy Sutfenfield, vice chancellor for finance and administration and Board of Trustees member Roger Perry will represent the University on the board.

Investors title head Allen Fine, attorney Bob Epting and Carolina Car Wash owner and developer Tom Tucker, as well as Rohrbacher, will fill the other seats. The 6 members will appoint a seventh member together.

Nelson said the task of the new group is different from the former one.

"New challenges and new opportunities call for a new organization," Nelson said. "I have high expectations for this group."

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

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FUND

FROM PAGE 3

Reinhardt said he believed it was very good that the University has been able to invoke this clause to remedy its workplace health issues.

"I think it showed a good case of identifying a problem and fixing it quickly."

The second project is repairs to the bathrooms in Old West Residence Hall which have also suffered due to water damage.

Water leakage had damaged much of the wooden framework of the bathrooms, specifically in the

"I think it showed a good case of identifying a problem and fixing it quickly."

PETER REINHARDT, DIRECTOR

shower stalls. Runberg said the emergency plan was invoked in order to have the project completed by August when residence halls reopen.

About 100 students are expected to move into Old West Residence Hall in the beginning of the school year.

University officials try to avoid calling on the emergency plan, Runberg said.

"We try not to declare an emergency because if we have enough time to do it under normal procedures, we do it," he said.

The plan is called upon about once a year, he said, and it is only a coincidence that the plan was invoked for the two projects at the same time.

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

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18 SU	URGE OVERKILL w/ The Last Vegas and Stoll Vaughn** (\$12/\$15)
22 TH	Dirk Powell
23 FR	ANTIBALAS Afrobeat Orchestra
25 SU	MURPHY'S LAW w/ Antagonizers, Sweet Poison, The Louls and Done Deal**
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AUGUST

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22 SU	RAVEONETTES w/ Rogers Sisters**
24 TU	Burning Brides, The Explosion
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