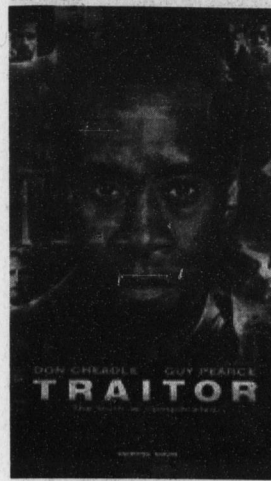


MOVIESHORTS

TRAITOR



★★★★☆

"Traitor" director Jeffrey Nachmanoff clearly knows how easy it is to botch up a movie about Islamic terrorism. He treads very lightly with the subject, trying to avoid the pitfalls of knee-jerk race baiting and head-in-the-sand relativism. And for the most part he

succeeds. Though the script drops a few too many faux-profound one-liners, the film provides a nuanced and sophisticated look at the similarities and differences between two worlds locked in the "War on Terror." Don Cheadle stars as an undercover Muslim U.S. Army operative trying to infiltrate a terrorist cell operating in Europe and America. His plan is so secret that even the U.S. government thinks he's a terrorist, leading to plenty of confusions of loyalty and nail-biting fears of exposure. Nachmanoff wields this ambiguity considerably better than the writers handled the lines, winding up with characters whose stories are complex and interesting. He's out to prove that not all terrorists live in caves, and not all Southern Baptists burn crosses.

The major element holding the movie back is the acting. Cheadle's performance is unremarkable, as are most of the other actors. Said Taghmaoui, playing Cheadle's true-believing co-conspirator, is the only actor who's up to par.

But what's lost in acting is made up for in set locations. From a

Yemeni prison to the streets of Marseilles to a housing project in Chicago's South Side, these locations provide a striking visual reminder that Islamic terrorism is a byproduct of globalization.

-Jonathan Pattishall

"BABYLON A.D."

★★★★☆

Not even Vin Diesel can save the underachieving sci-fi flick "Babylon A.D."

In a dystopian future, the mercenary Toorop must smuggle a girl and her surrogate mother from Mongolia to the United States.

A desolate and rugged near future gives this thriller hope at the beginning.

Unfortunately, director Mathieu Kassovitz squanders all opportunity for coherence and instead tries to force a complicated plot down our throats.

Actually, it's hard to blame Kassovitz, who has more acting than directing credentials with roles in films such as "Munich" and "Amelie."

Interviews with Kassovitz reveal that the editing process left the film

with, in his opinion, nothing but violence and stupidity.

To be fair, a bit more violence at least could have made for a mindless action film. Instead, a confusing and muddled mess of a plot ruins any chance of a real story.

For the first 30 minutes, "Babylon A.D." has so much potential. The world it creates is reminiscent of the bleak and beautiful backdrop of near-masterpiece "Children of Men." Add the underappreciated talents of leading-man Diesel and a surprise hit should have been the next logical step.

Instead, with an inadequate plot and jumbled execution, "Babylon A.D." turns big budget into B-movie.

-David Bergart

"HAMLET 2"

★★★★☆

"Hamlet 2" is a bad movie. Forget about the funny-looking commercials and what looks to be the sublimely offensive lampooning of Jesus and a ridiculous romp mocking the over serious, self-righteous theater world in general.

The most offensive thing about

this movie is that the writers thought that this lazy, unfunny crap should be foisted upon audiences.

Here's a tip: If you're going to use "from a writer for 'South Park'" as a selling point, find one who's done more than three episodes.

British comedian Steve Coogan plays a failed actor turned horrible drama teacher who decides to write a sequel to "Hamlet" to keep the drama program at his school from getting the axe.

His character is so selfish and obnoxiously oblivious to the people around him that you can't help but root for his failure.

The movie is also filled with ridiculous bit parts, including Amy Poehler as an overzealous civil rights-protecting lawyer, and, absurdly, "Hollow Man" actress Elisabeth Shue playing herself.

The gags come quickly and from left field, and the only reason the jokes are remotely humorous is because you don't have the time to process how bad they are until another one is thrown at you.

There is zero redemption for any of the characters, and the badly

tacked-on epilogue feels way too forced.

This movie is really bad.

There really isn't much else to say.

Seriously, there isn't even a funny quip I can toss out to convey how painful it is.

It just isn't worth the energy.

-Rachael Oehring



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