

'Beloved' explores terror of slavery

Oprah's character fights with past

BY JASON HARDY
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Movie Review

The physical and emotional scars of slavery have been addressed many a time in modern cinema, but few films delve into the spiritual aspects as much as Touchstone Pictures' latest release, "Beloved."

Based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Toni Morrison, "Beloved" tells the tale of Sethe (Oprah Winfrey), an escaped slave from the South, who is haunted and held captive by the events of her past.

"Beloved" marks Winfrey's first starring role in a feature film since her Oscar-nominated performance for best supporting actress in "The Color Purple." It also marks the end of a decade-long struggle by Winfrey to assemble the right cast and crew to transform "Beloved" into a motion picture.

Though the picture remains mostly true to the novel, it doesn't make a completely successful leap to the big screen. Because of some vague character traits, the film has an overall unsettled feel to it. With the novel, one is able to understand more of the symbolism that is unattainable with its on-screen incarnation.

However, the movie does provide

an original and in-depth view of the spiritual terror rooted in the atrocities of slavery. The film is set in 1873 Ohio, where Sethe is attempting to lead a simple life with her only living daughter, Denver (Kimberly Elise). The two are continually plagued by a spirit from Sethe's past who won't allow her to move on from the events of her past.

With the arrival of her old friend, Paul D (Danny Glover), Sethe begins to confront her past head-on. When a girl named Beloved (Thandie Newton) arrives at Sethe's doorstep, Sethe's determination and composure are tested once again.

Few actors are known more for their off-screen personae as Oprah Winfrey and with the public's

knowledge of her gestures, speaking style and facial expressions, connections between Sethe and Winfrey would be easy to spot. Nevertheless, Winfrey delivers a solid, believable performance and never strays from her character's innate mannerisms.

Glover also does a fine job in his portrayal as the kind-hearted yet dimwitted Paul D. Though not a huge



COURTESY PHOTO
OPRAH WINFREY (center) stars as Sethe, Thandie Newton (left) stars as Beloved, and Kimberly Elise (right) stars as Denver in "Beloved," based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Toni Morrison.

stretch for Glover as an actor, his use of facial expressions and other characteristics make it understandable why Paul D is so likable despite his vagabond nature.

Though relatively unknown, Newton proves, with her depiction of Beloved, that she is quite talented. With her incredibly blank facial

expressions and contortions, she captures an eerie essence of Beloved not explored in the novel.

While the novel is definitely more in-depth and complete, the film still has a great deal to offer. However, for a complete understanding and appreciation of the story, Morrison's version is much better.

The Facts

Title: "Beloved"
Stars: Oprah Winfrey, Danny Glover, Thandie Newton
Director: Jonathan Demme
Rating: R (violence, adult situations, nudity)
Grade: B
Five Words: Oprah's personal labor of love



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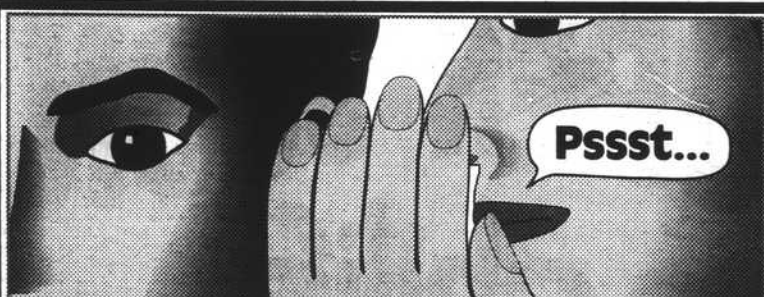
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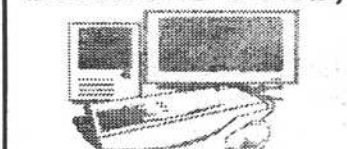
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