

Previews spoil 'Down to Earth'

BY SARAH SUMNER

If you want a movie that hasn't been redone and redone and redone. Well, you aren't going to get it with "Down to Earth."

This is the third time that this idea has been made. "Heaven Can Wait" with Warren Beatty was a remake of "Here Comes Mr. Jordan," and the remake of the remake is with Chris Rock.

Rock, who is an Saturday Night Live alum and has had parts in "Dr. Doolittle" and "Dogma," is Lance Bartlett, a no-talent comedian trying his best to be one of the last comics to appear at the Apollo before it closes. He is killed before his time

Down to Earth

and gets a second chance in an old, rich white man's body.

Rock is funny and makes outrageous, hilarious facial expressions. He delivers his jokes well and seems to be at ease with the comedy part of the movie.

Of course he is. The romantic side is a bit different. He is not an actor who can play off cheesy, love scenes. He can't help but smile during the sweet scenes.

Regina King plays a social rights activist and Rock's love interest. King, from "Enemy of the State," "Jerry Maguire," and the 1980s TV show "227," has ver-

satility to perform in dramas, actions and comedies and comes off as understanding her role by playing it well.

Chazz Palminteri is Mr. King, a sort of manager of heaven, who makes sure that things run smoothly. Palminteri is charming and graceful in his acting technique. Although he is a large figurehead in the movie, he isn't in it much, but when he is, he is the focus of attention, demanding it with his presence.

The movie is strong at the beginning with joke after joke, but unfortunately it is all seen during the previews; it's nothing new. That is when the movie loses a little oomph. It is still funny and

flowing, but it begins to repeat the same dilemma that it had just solved a few minutes before.

"Down to Earth" is a mediocre movie that is funny in a 21st Century mind. It has good jokes, but the love story is unrealistic. Toward the end, it starts to make you want to roll your eyes and furrow your brow because you know the happy ending is a cop-out.

"Down to Earth." Starring Chris Rock, Regina King and Chazz Palminteri. Directed by Chris Weitz and Paul Weitz. Rated PG-13 for sexual humor, language and drug references. Showing at the Plaza 4 and East Park.

Folk singer Moore focuses on real issues

LAFTA from page 8

"He does a great mix of acoustic blues, folk, original, serious and funny music. Every song doesn't sound the same," she said.

Hogue also appreciates the real life issues reflected in Moore's writing, which highlights everything from relationships to kids.

"He writes real interesting songs about all sorts of subjects," she said.

"This is a piece that is not typically heard in concert."

Joe Kraus president, Lincoln Friends of Chamber Music

One song Hogue particularly likes is called "Waitresses," which Moore wrote about different waitresses he has come in contact with over the years.

Painter draws upon slavery

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

As a young painter influenced by the Harlem cultural Renaissance and its expressions of freedom, Jacob Lawrence blended art and storytelling to portray two black icons' triumph over oppression.

Inspired partly by his own family's slave past, Lawrence chose Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman as heroes for a series of paintings tracing the abolitionists' lives from bondage to champions of freedom.

Lawrence's tribute to their unconquerable spirit is a 63-piece exhibition on display at the Speed Art Museum, a short distance from the Ohio River that once represented a springboard to freedom for runaway slaves. Museum officials expect at least 40,000 people to see the show, which opened in early February and continues through April 22.

Lawrence's classic in narrative art, painted in casein tempera on hardboard panels, took three years to research and paint, from 1938 to 1940. He wrote the captions to accompany each painting. The series helped catapult the artist to a lofty place among 20th-Century American painters. Lawrence died last June at 82.

"He had an intuitive sense of how to tell a story visually, even at a very, very young age," says Lou Stovall, a Washington, D.C., artist and silkscreen printer who was a friend and associate of Lawrence.

Stovall, who printed many of Lawrence's works, says Lawrence excelled at tapping historical subjects to mix social lessons into his art.

"Jacob used history to try to teach some sense of tolerance and racial equity at the same time as making his art," Stovall says.

Lawrence's mixing of art and history produced other acclaimed series featuring Toussaint L'Ouverture, the Haitian slave who led his country to freedom from French rule, the white abolitionist John Brown and the great migrations of blacks from the South to the North and West. Fifteen screen prints from the L'Ouverture series are also on display as part of the Speed exhibit.

Artist Sam Gilliam recalls watching four white women weep as they toured Lawrence's migration series at a gallery in Washington, D.C. It showed the

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Sam Gilliam artist

appeal of Lawrence's art across ethnic lines, he says.

"I don't like black art being just for black people, particularly when we are against a high wall and outnumbered," says Gilliam, who had a long friendship with Lawrence. "Art that is open and shows the next step is very powerful, and that is what I like about the Lawrence series."

Lawrence's own surroundings - growing up during the Depression, when culture thrived in Harlem - nurtured him as an artist and inspired him to portray Douglass and Tubman.

Trained at the Harlem Art Workshops, he wasn't yet 20 when he started working in the studio of painter Charles Alston. It was there that Lawrence met and learned from such intellectuals as philosopher Alain Locke, writers Langston Hughes and Claude McKay and painter Aaron Douglas.

Douglass and Tubman remained inspiring figures in Harlem, their names invoked by street orators as the spirit of black consciousness bloomed during the era. The horrors of slavery were also personal for Lawrence, whose grandparents and great-grandparents had been enslaved.

His Douglass-Tubman series conjures powerful images of suffering, social turmoil and the ultimate triumph of the human spirit over evil.

The Speed's exhibit hall is filled with contemporary recordings of spirituals that had been popular among slaves. Some of the songs offered more than comfort, revealing clues that were passed among slaves about safe routes north if they should escape.

The series takes a sequential glimpse into the abolitionists' lives.

One painting shows a young Douglass standing with two other children watching the flogging of a slave named Millie. She clutches a tree whose branches reach out,

ominously, toward the black children and Millie.

"You feel the tension of the figure of Millie as she is grabbing onto the tree, trying to maintain some sense of control and fighting the overseer," said Kim Spence, the Speed Museum's associate curator.

As a young man, Douglass is seen in another painting overpowering a man known as a "slave breaker," who is attempting to beat him into submission.

Tubman felt the wrath of an angry overseer in her own youth. A painting shows Tubman stretched on the ground after being struck on the head with an iron bar. A snake slithers nearby, a reference to evil that appears in many of the Tubman pictures as a denunciation of slavery.

The next painting depicts another traumatic moment from Tubman's childhood. She watches as shadowy figures of women slaves beg for mercy while being flogged by an overseer, whip in hand, who stands over them.

"His profile becomes very wolf-like and very ominous," Spence says. "It is an incredibly moving image because he uses silhouette and form to tell such a story."

Another haunting painting shows Tubman's perspective from the auction block, with subtle hints of the hardships awaiting her as prospective buyers size her up with sinister, gray eyes. One man holds a whip, another has a holstered pistol. Barren trees highlight the landscape.

The series shows the escape of Douglass and Tubman from slavery and gradual rise to the forefront of the abolitionist movement.

The series takes Douglass and Tubman through the Civil War and ends with uplifting messages of hope - an American flag and yellow tulip in the Douglass series and a bright, starry night in the Tubman series.

String trio hits Sheldon

TRIO from page 8


the show's program notes, with Douvier stating that he "started playing violin when he realized that his older brother didn't like it," and Hirth-Schmidt revealing that he really wanted to become a veterinarian, but he "knew that laziness was not compatible with the study of veterinary medicine."

The three musicians, however, are very serious performers, memorizing all of their music.

This is rarely seen in chamber music, but it is something that Kraus believes adds to the audience's enjoyment.

"When they play by heart, it leaves them free to think about the essence of the music," Kraus said.

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