

'Talladega' Not Your Typical Ferrell Flick

By Mike Rosenberg
Staff Writer

PG-13 movies and Will Ferrell just don't mix. His new movie, "Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby" proves this theory while providing minimal laughs and your garden variety "been there, seen that" type of plot. After starring in such smash hits as "Old School" and "Anchorman," Ferrell has appeared in complete stinkers like "Elf," "Bewitched" and "Kicking and Screaming." The more Ferrell plays toward a younger crowd, the less funny he gets. You'd think he would know this after getting his start on the late-night television show, "Saturday Night Live," but apparently he either hasn't figured it out yet or doesn't care as long as he is getting paid by the theater-load. "Talladega Nights" seemed promising considering that it revolved around a silly plot with plenty of hijinks by Ferrell, who has to be considered the No. 1 comedy actor in Hollywood right now. The movie's disappointing style is established early, however, when his character, NASCAR driver Ricky Bobby, rehearses a commer-

cial for Big Red. He says, "Hi I'm Ricky Bobby, and if you don't chew Big Red then (screw) you."—except they bleeped out the word that went in place of screw. This was also the funniest part of the entire movie. When you don't allow Ferrell to go all out and basically act like a complete idiot for 90-120 minutes, his performances are no different than your typical Hollywood "funny" men and women that continue to bog down the comedy genre. Because Hollywood has dissolved to the point where there are so few comedy actors who can actually make people laugh, a new Ferrell movie like this should warrant some attention. Ferrell is forced to carry the entire movie, however, as the peripheral cast is borderline miserable. Not only did nobody who was not named Will Ferrell make me laugh, their characters were boring and extremely difficult to connect with -- or even tolerate. Bobby's main buddy, Cal Naughton, Jr. (John C. Reilly) is basically a non-funny and emotionless version of Bobby himself. Ricky's dad, Reese Bobby (Gary Cole) is neither an "I hate you, son" nor an "I support you, son"

type of father, leading the viewer to get really confused during his interactions with Bobby. This interaction—a central plot theme—also makes it virtually impossible for the movie to have either a happy or sad ending. Other characters include a bizarre crew chief, Lucius Washington (Michael Clarke Duncan), who is constantly grinning and Bobby's "smokin'-hot wife," Carley Bobby (Leslie Bibb). Basically, the entire movie is a disguised rip on the South. Most of the jokes focus on how stupid southerners are, both in terms of book smarts and street smarts. If you enjoy this type of humor, you might find yourself liking it a bit more than politically correct people tell you that you should. If this sort of humor offends you for whatever reason, however, you'll probably be more affronted than anything else. Ferrell does provide a few cheap laughs, and if you are one of those people who just likes to laugh at everything that is intended to be funny then you'll love this movie. If not, wait for it to play five times a week on Comedy Central in a few years.

No One Naps During 'Once Upon a Mattress'

By Nimray Husain
Staff Writer

"Once Upon A Mattress," which ended its run on Sunday, helped the Highlands Summer Theatre Season spring into high gear, transporting its audiences to a fairytale kingdom with a devious queen, a mute king, distressed damsels and awkward knights brought to life by the melodic voices of the cast. The cast of the production, which consisted largely of Cal State East Bay students, alumni and young student actors from Moreau Catholic High School, executed the challenging play without missing a step or having a single voice go hoarse. The scenery and lighting design by Richard Olmsted, a faculty member at CSUEB, was brilliantly designed and transformed the stage with each new scene. The story, based on the fairy tale, "The Princess and the Pea," turns on an unhappy curse that has left King Sextimus (Jemaine Alexander) unable to speak. Meanwhile, his devious wife, Queen Aggravian (Carissa Hatchel), with the help of the Wizard (Eddy Mulyono),

has taken control of the kingdom. In an attempt to keep Prince Dauntless (Bren Evangelista) single, the queen decrees that only the princess that can pass her test may marry her son. Worse yet, no one else in the kingdom may marry until Dauntless does. Lady Larkin (Kim Castle) and Sir Harry (Marcus Silva) are extremely disturbed by this fact since Larkin is now pregnant with Harry's baby. Narration and comedic insight that helped to unfold the plot was offered by the Jester (Ana Ramos) and the Minstrel (Dan Mc Quigg). "I'm really blown away by the caliber

of the performances considering they are just students, and you can really see the hard work they put into the play," said audience member Lubna Agha. "Mattress" was directed and staged by Darryl V. Jones who, before joining CSUEB, taught theatre at the University of Michigan. Jones received much recognition "Spunk," which he directed for the African Continuum Theatre Co. in Washington D.C. Off-Broadway, he directed for the Blue Heron Theatre Co., earning an AUDELCO Award for outstanding production.

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