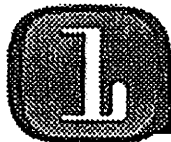


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Summer Movie Reviews

By Darren Futa, Channel One Online

August 6, 1997

Def Jam's How to be a Player



Director: Lionel C. Martin

Stars: Bill Bellamy, Natalie Desselle, Pierre Edwards, Mari Morrow, Lark Voorhies

Premiere: August 6

Rated: R (Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian.)

Official Site:

Practically everything you need in order to decide whether to see "Def Jam's How to be a Player" is right there in the title.

A fantasy flick for guys who think women are things to be played, "How to be a Player" bears the label of the company that produces the uncensored, no-holds-barred HBO series "Def Comedy Jam." While that label describes the movie's urban style, it also should be taken as fair warning of the raunchy material found within. But unlike the best episodes of "Def Comedy Jam," this film is only occasionally funny and lacks the dynamic comedians it desperately needs to be entertaining.

Which isn't to say that rock-n-jock MTV personality Bill Bellamy is bad as the title womanizer, it's just that the movie cries out for a wilder, more improvisational actor like Martin Lawrence or Eddie Murphy to fill in the laugh gaps. (Come to think of it, Lawrence in "A Thin Line Between Love and Hate" and Murphy in "Boomerang," play pretty much the same characters as the lead in this movie.)

Bellamy plays Dray, the kind of guy who thinks he's the best thing to

happen to women since [lipstick]. His only worry in the world is that one of his many girlfriends, especially Lisa (Voorhies, using the same name as her character in "Saved by the Bell"), will find out about the others. Apparently, he's not too worried because he spends an entire day visiting his roster of women, taking along his friends so he can dispense advice on what it takes to be a player including such gems as, "A married woman is a player's dream."

Each visit plays out like a mediocre, R-rated sitcom episode with predictable predicaments and a shameless parade of skin. Even if you throw out the fact that most of the humor runs at about the junior high level (this movie *loves* its fat jokes), the problem remains that the script is neither original nor clever.

Writers Mark Brown and Demetria Johnson attempt to cover up the story's piggish overtones by writing in a pair of women—Dray's sister Jenny (Desselle) and her modelesque friend Katrina (Morrow)—who try to bust Dray by inviting all his girlfriends to the same party. The movie's loyalty, however, lies firmly with Dray who lives like a prince in a huge apartment and faces no consequences of his depraved behavior.

It's too bad because there are so few mainstream movies like this that are made specifically for an urban-black audience. Director Lionel Martin doesn't bring anything remarkable or attention-grabbing to his first movie, although Pierre Edwards, who plays one of Dray's friends, grows on you by the end of the film. His funniest line displays some of the qualities one wishes "How to be a Player" had more of: wit, feeling, a touch of painful truth.

"I know light-skinned brothers aren't in," he grimaces after getting rejected by another woman, "but we're coming back."

What is your review of the movie "Def Jam's How to be a Player"?

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B.

Havent seen it, but it looks KewL to me.

Chip, 16

Haven't seen it, but it does look similar to the past flicks such as "A Thin Line..." and "Boomerang" as you said. Hey, but that song "Big Bad Mama" by Foxy Brown and Dru Hill off the soundtrack sounds cool.