

Presidents lacks strong writing



Cleon (Bokeem Woodbine), Jose (Freddy Rodriguez), Anthony (Larenz Tate) and Kirby (Keith David) prepare to rob an armored car in *Dead Presidents*.

By Wes Swift
THE BATTALION

If there is one word to describe *Dead Presidents*, it would be long. At two and a half hours long, *Dead Presidents* is a bit too much for an audience to swallow.

The film tries to expose the society that pushed Vietnam veterans to drastic actions to survive. Instead, the audience gets a choppy, drawn-out tale of misery in the big city.

What is strange is that The Hughes Brothers, who directed *Dead Presidents*, succeeded with a similar theme in their acclaimed debut, *Menace II Society*.

Dead Presidents stars Larenz Tate as Anthony Curtis, an inner-city youth in 1969. Tired of school, Curtis enlists in the Marine Corps and joins a special forces unit in Vietnam.

Curtis finds a new, dark side of life in Vietnam, where a preacher's son carries the head

of a Viet Cong soldier in his backpack and lives becomes a precious commodity.

When Curtis returns to his old neighborhood, he finds life a hard pill to swallow. He can't find a job, and he can barely find a way to put food on the table for his girlfriend Juanita and his baby daughter.

Desperate, Curtis turns to his friends Kirby (Keith David), Curtis's mentor and a Korean War vet; Skip (Chris Tucker) and Jose (Freddy Rodriguez), his childhood friends; Cleon (Bokeem Woodbine) the preacher's son from Vietnam; and Delilah (N'bushe Wright), Juanita's activist sister.

The six friends plan to rip off a truck carrying old bills to be burned in Washington. But the heist goes terribly awry, with disastrous results for everyone involved.

This premise has tons of potential, but The Hughes Brothers pile so much gut-wrenching misery into the first 90 minutes of the film, that when the heist ac-

MOVIE REVIEW

Dead Presidents
Starring Larenz Tate, Keith Tate and N'bushe Wright
Directed by The Hughes Brothers
Rated R
Playing at Hollywood 16
★★ 1/2 (out of five)

tually arrives, it's anticlimactic.

Tate, David and the rest of the cast are talented and give excellent performances, but their efforts are wasted on a script that just begs to be cut 30 minutes.

The problem is that it is hard to determine just what can be cut.

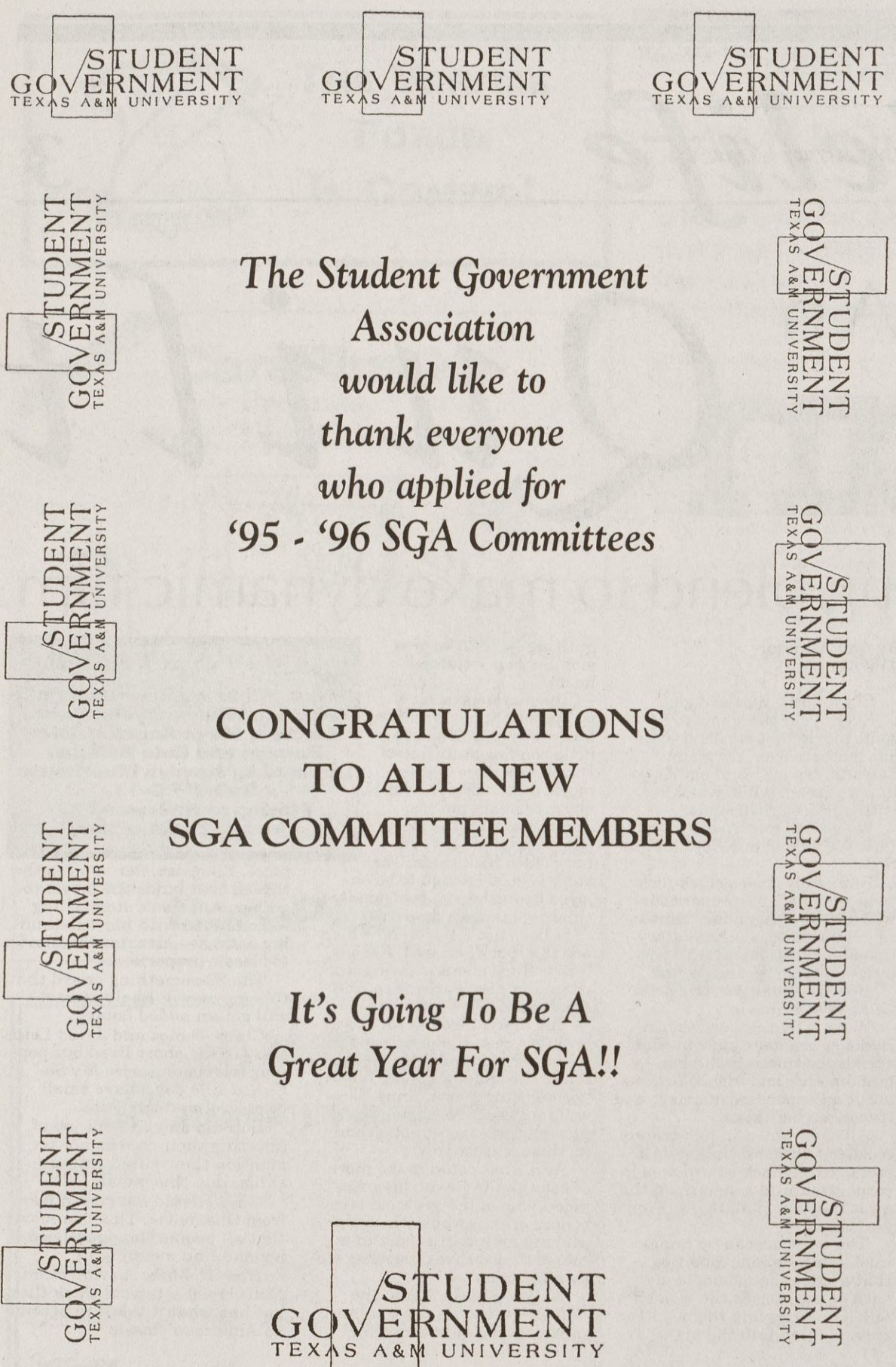
In fact, everything in the film needs to be in the film. The Hughes brothers and Michael Henry Brown should have done some major rewrites before filming started.

They did not, and *Dead Presidents* is a drop-dead failure.

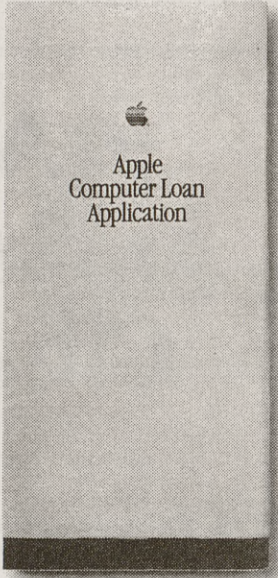
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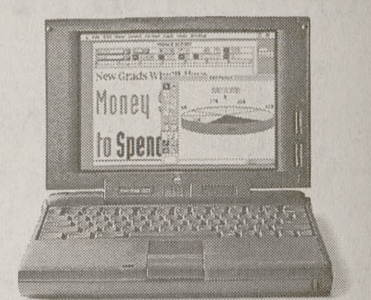
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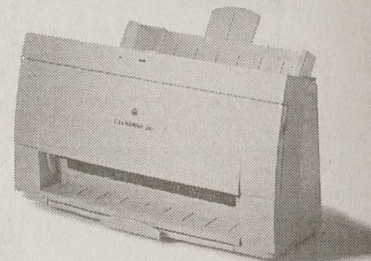
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