

# AGGIE life

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## Solid as a Rock

By David Winder  
THE BATTALION

*Twister* had action but no plot. *Mission: Impossible* had action but a confusing plot. *The Rock* has action, a plot, Sean Connery and Nicolas Cage, making it the best action-thriller since the original *Die Hard*. Brig. Gen. Francis Hummel (Ed Harris) is tired of being screwed around by the U.S. government. He has continually lost men in covert military operations and petitioned the government to honor them. After being continuously denied by the government, Hummel decides to take action. Hummel and his commandos capture Alcatraz Island—"The Rock" along with a group of tourists, to grab the government's attention and \$100 million ransom.

Just in case the government chooses to ignore them, rockets loaded with VX gas, the most lethal gas in the world, are set to destroy the San Francisco Bay area.

Enter FBI chemical expert Stanley Goodspeed (Cage), and federal prisoner Patrick Mason (Connery). Goodspeed is needed to disarm the rockets, while Mason, the only man to ever escape from Alcatraz, is needed to get a Navy SEAL unit on the island. From there, it's kill or be killed.

That's it. That's the whole plot. No special effects being played over and over. No asking your neighbor every five minutes who the bad guys are now. *The Rock* is just action-filled fun, thanks to the performances



of Connery and Cage. Connery depicts Mason as a loose-cannon James Bond. He is suave but a little crazy after being locked up for the last 30 years for stealing U.S. government secrets. Mason knows who killed John F. Kennedy and whether aliens really landed in Roswell, New Mexico. Goodspeed is a FBI agent who would rather be listening to The Beatles than doing anything else. He doesn't even carry

a gun. So when he's told he has to go to Alcatraz to disarm the lethal rockets, he's not exactly willing. In fact, he pukes his guts out like he has been on a drinking binge for a month.

Harris is excellent as the general who truly believes killing over a million people is justified by what the government has done to him. His men died with honor, and he wants the world to know about it.

The scene in which Harris and Connery appear together shows there can be excellent acting in an action-thriller. Watch out Arnold, Sly and Jean-Claude. Neither Connery, Cage nor Harris will be nominated for Academy Awards for their work on *The Rock*.

They should get an award for making one entertaining film. Watch out Arnold, Sly and Jean-Claude.

## Strong performances drive *Once Upon a Time*

By James Francis  
THE BATTALION

The life experience of African Americans living in the South, during the time of segregation, has been a subject of filmmakers.

There has not been a movie since *The Color Purple* that embodies the spirit and soul of the African-American family in such detail.

*Once Upon A Time When We Were Colored* is a touching family drama which spans 16 years of a young boy's life.

The film begins in 1946 in the Mississippi Delta, where a female field hand lies between the rows of unpicked cotton preparing to give birth.

In her frightened state, Ma Ponk (Phylisha Rashad) rushes to her aid and assists in the baby's delivery.

A boy is born and this begins the story of his life in what is labeled 'Colored Town.'

The film evolves into a magnificent tale of southern living for African Americans when 'White Only' and 'Colored' signs adorned bathroom doors and water fountains—when working in cotton fields was the only way to make money and families were often split apart.

There were numerous other situations African Americans faced then, but the film does not spend a lot of screen-time wasting away audience interest on subjects which have been profiled time and time again.

The film does touch on one of these situations when the Ku Klux Klan makes its way into a neighboring town, but the audience is never brought

back into any Klan activities. Many movies suffer from not venturing into the various themes and subplots, but *Once Upon A Time When We Were Colored* uses themes and subplots to strengthen its hold.

One hearty stronghold accredited to the film is the award-caliber performance delivered by Phylisha Rashad. Her role deals with the common complexities of life involving the young boy she helped deliver, her own son and mother, and finding her inner strength.

More commonly known for her portrayal of Claire Huxtable on the TV series *The Cosby Show*, Rashad gives a dramatic performance stronger than any other commercially-known actress.

Along with great performances, the backdrop of a film is becoming more important these days. Although there are

no high-tension action sequences, the camera works magic with authentic scenery.

Classic cinematography depicts billowy-white cotton fields, comparative views of dirt and paved roads and the overall essence of small-town life in the South.

*Once Upon A Time When We Were Colored* features excellent direction, moving performances and believable cinematography that is not overly exaggerated.

It is a film, unlike others, showing Black and White opposition. It focuses on African-American evolution as a people, no different from other culture, and *Once Upon A Time When We Were Colored* harbors a unique strength that makes each individual special.



FBI chemical expert Stanley Goodspeed (Nicolas Cage) and federal prisoner Patrick Mason (Sean Connery) enter Alcatraz Island to stop Brig. Gen. Francis Hummel (Ed Harris) from destroying the San Francisco Bay Area.

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