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Monday • April 27, 1998

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TRAVIS HOPPER staff writer

f you're expecting Boyz in the Hood, you've got your expectations set a little too high. If you're expecting Striptease, you've got your expectations set a bit too low. The Player's Club, the direc-

torial debut from rapper/actor/producer Ice Cube, is one of those middle-of-the-road films that is poignant and gripping one minute, sappy and contrived the next. The premise of the film is more or less the Great American Dream set in a seedy, two-bit strip club: a girl named Diamond (Lisa Raye) goes out on her own to make it big, fights against all odds to see her dream through and ultimately triumphs.

It starts off with a pregnant Diamond getting thrown out of her house by her parents because she wants to go to a expensive national university and not the community college upstate. Determined to prove her parents wrong, she moves in with her boyfriend and goes to work at a minimum wage job selling shoes while attending school at night.

Everything thing is great until her boyfriend moves out and leaves her stuck with the bills and a young son. She is then drawn into The Player's Club, a poor man's strip club owned by Dollar Bill (Bernie Mac, who steals every scene he's in), by two dancers who promise her quick money and lots of it.

She earns her quick money, but she soon gets wrapped up in the day-today cycle of going to class all day working all night and trying not to be corrupted by some of the club's shady characters. This all comes to a head when her cousin Ebony (Monica Calhoun), who has come to live and work with her, is brutally raped and beaten by one of the dancer's brothers.

Diamond confronts Ronnie (Chrystale Wilson), whose brother has beaten and raped her cousin, back at

The Player's Club

Starring Jamie Foxx and Bernie Mac

Directed by Ice Cube

Rated R

Playing at Hollywood 16

Critique: B-

the club, and what transpires next can arguably be called the greatest cinematic fight between two women. The police then show up, arrest Ronnie and her brother, and leave the crooked Dollar Bill to fend for himself against the evil Saint Louis and his henchmen. Diamond and club DJ Blue (Jamie Foxx) come away virtually

unscarred and live happily ever after.
The film is powerful in that it accurately portrays the struggles of some-one trying to make it on her own without the proper tools. Diamond wants to be a news reporter, but without a college degree her dream is unattainable. Stripping is her means of support; it is done out of necessity, not greed or lust. One can see just how degraded and humiliated she is when she has to give her first lap dance, or when her college professor enters the club in the middle of a performance.

These powerful moments are all too often offset by corny and contrived dialogue. The recurring lines "Make money, don't let the money make you," may look good on paper, but they just sound stupid on screen. No one spouts clichés off the top of his or her head like that, and it takes away from the moments.

Thankfully, there are more powerful moments than stupid lines. Ice Cube proves himself to be a very capable director, and the cast, which is anchored by two actresses making their film debut, is top notch. Look forward to Ice Cube's next film because, as he's shown in the past, he'll only get better.



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