

# REEL

# CRITIQUE

## Bringing Down the House Queen Latifah, Steve Martin, Eugene Levy Touchstone Pictures

Peter Sanderson (Steve Martin), recently divorced, appears to have it all — from a plush home in the hills of California to a fancy sports car. Although Peter misses his wife, he begins an Internet relationship with "LawyerGirl," who seems like the perfect woman to help him forget about his ex-wife.

Peter spends a lot of time making sure everything is perfect for his first big date with the attractive, blonde woman in the picture he received from LawyerGirl. The doorbell rings, Peter runs to the door, and Charlene Levy (Queen Latifah), fresh out of the Los Angeles County Jail, busts into his home and into his life, ready to stir things up for this career-obsessed man.

Dressed in dark blue shorts with a matching top (decorated only by identification numbers on the back), Charlene is definitely not the petite blonde Peter expected to see. Charlene, wrongfully charged with armed robbery, is an honest woman, and Charlene's image is clearly in the photo that Peter received via email. When Peter takes a closer look, she is in the back right corner being arrested. Peter wants her out immediately, and Charlene wants Peter, an attorney, to take her case.

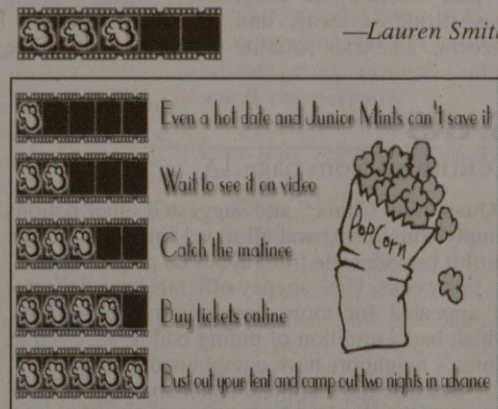
In order to get what she wants, Charlene becomes an intrusive house guest insisting that Peter throw her a huge house party in his home and showing up in her most "ghetto fabulous" outfit at his country club while he is meeting

with a top client. Peter finally gives in and the two most unlikely of companions develop an endearing friendship.

Although the movie is loaded with racial stereotyping, a weak script and Steve Martin (whose better comedic days are long past), it is saved by Queen Latifah's flawless timing and her ability to make even overused jokes seem fresh. She is the reason the movie has grossed more than \$100 million, stayed No. 1 for three weeks, and still remains in the top 10 after four weeks.

Overall, the movie takes advantage of a lot of jokes that everyone has heard before and walks a thin line between harmless comedy and blatant racism. The best scene takes place in the bathroom of the country club as Charlene threatens to "kick the bulimia" out of a young yuppie who crosses her. With an average supporting cast, the Queen carries the show and is sure to bring down the house, even if she has to do it all on her own.

—Lauren Smith



### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Toni Braxton gives birth to second son

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Singer Toni Braxton and her husband have another son.

"They are doing great, both mother and baby are resting comfortably," her publicist, David Brokaw, said Tuesday.



BRAXTON

Diesel Ky Braxton Lewis was born Sunday at an Atlanta-area hospital. He's the second child of Braxton, 34, and her 32-year-old husband, Keri Lewis. They also have a 1-year-old son, Denim.

The Grammy-winning singer met Lewis when his band, Mint Condition, accompanied her on a concert tour.

#### Rolling Stones cancel concert in China

NEW DELHI, India (AP) — The Rolling Stones have arrived in India, after canceling their first-ever concert in China because of a mystery disease.

The flu-like illness has infected more than 1,800 people worldwide, killing at least 75, mostly in Asia.

The band arrived with its 150-strong entourage in the southern city of Bangalore late Tuesday on its "40 Licks" tour.

They had been scheduled to perform Tuesday in Shanghai and

April 4 in Beijing, but changed their minds because of travel warnings from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization.

These are just the latest shows the veteran rockers have canceled in their "40 Licks" tour because of the disease — severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS. They performed in Singapore earlier this week, but scrapped two weekend concerts in Hong Kong.

#### Mewes ordered to undergo drug rehab

FREEHOLD, N.J. (AP) — Jason Mewes, who played a pot-smoking slacker in the Kevin Smith films "Clerks" and "Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back," has been ordered to complete drug rehabilitation or face jail.

Mewes, 28, who failed to report for a court hearing stemming from a 1999 heroin conviction, had a warrant issued for his arrest in December 2001.

On Tuesday, he surrendered and pleaded guilty to probation violation charges. He admitted failing to report to his probation officer, take drug tests or undergo counseling. He also admitted leaving the state without permission and lying to his probation officer.

Superior Court Judge Michael D. Farren ordered Mewes to begin treatment within 10 days at Discovery House, a rehabilitation center in Marlboro.

Mewes, a Highlands native now living in Hollywood, Calif., must complete the program before he's allowed to leave New Jersey, Farren said.

If he violates his parole again, he faces up to five years in prison.

#### Williams' daughter to run Boston Marathon

BOSTON (AP) — Ted Williams' daughter is coming to town to run in the Boston Marathon and help out the Red Sox Hall of Famer's favorite charity.

Claudia Williams will run in the April 21 race to benefit the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, which had close ties to her father.

"I remember visiting the Jimmy Fund Clinic with him and seeing how sensitive he was with the kids and the impact his visit had on them," she said recently. "I want to give something to the cause that my father felt so strongly about."

Williams said she took up running to deal with the grief of her father's death.

The Red Sox traditionally play at home on race day, a state holiday, starting the game at 11 a.m. so fans filing out of Fenway Park can watch the marathon's lead runners go through Kenmore Square.

The two Boston fixtures also are linked through Dana-Farber.

Williams will participate in the Dana-Farber Marathon Challenge, a program in which runners agree to raise at least \$2,000 in pledges for charity.

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