

Janet Jackson, as Justice, finds solace in poetry

Preview
"Poetic Justice," opening at suburban theaters Friday, marks superstar Janet Jackson's motion picture debut as Justice, a reclusive young woman who works as a hairdresser and writes poetry to cope with heartbreak.

Abandoned and alone, Justice masks her shyness with a tough-talking exterior. Her life intersects on a chance road trip from south-central Los Angeles to Oakland, Calif., with Lucky (Tupac Shakur), a mailman who resists temptations of an easier life on the street for a steady job. The trip is destined to open their eyes to lives they never imagined.

"Nobody, but nobody can make it out here alone" is the renowned poet Maya Angelou's telling anthem underscoring the lives of the south-central Los Angeles inhabitants who people "Poetic Justice," writer/director John Singleton's modern-day street romance.

Presented by Columbia Pictures, "Poetic Justice" also stars Tyra Ferrell, Regina King, Joe Torry and Roger Guenveur Smith. The film is produced by Steve Nicolaides and John Singleton and includes poetry by Maya Angelou. The music is by Stanley Clarke.

PREVIEW

In "Poetic Justice," director John Singleton takes audiences back to the hood of south-central Los Angeles — back to the neighborhood where he made his motion picture debut, "Boyz n' The Hood." His second film explores the lives of two working class survivors — giving them voice, in part, through the poetry of Maya Angelou.

The director decidedly moves his subject matter away from that of guys who pack guns to women armed with words.

"This movie is a graduation for me," said Singleton. "It's an attempt to make a more mature film. For 'Boyz . . . I wanted to make a teenage film, an 'African Graffiti' set in my neighborhood. When I started thinking about what I would do next, I began to wonder how all these brothers getting shot is affecting their girlfriends and their sisters and brothers."

"So I came up with this character named Justice, who is in love with this guy and the dude ends up getting killed right in front of her eyes. It sets her life on a whole different track. Instead of going to college, she goes to cosmetology school and starts doing hair."

"Then I thought about the term

"poetic justice," which is how everything that happens is, ironically, appropriate. I then made Justice a poet who uses poetry as a creative catharsis for all this hurt that's happening in her life."

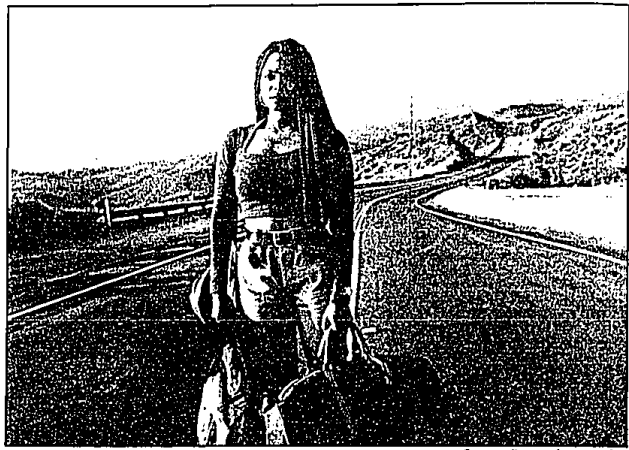
Singleton based his film on actual events and researched his main character by speaking with several female friends to develop a strong feminine perspective. "Most girls I knew growing up had a lot to deal with in life and their only outlet was to write poetry," said Singleton. "That was their only right of passage — some of it good and some bad, but every woman used poetry as an outlet. That's when I decided it was time for a woman's story to be told."

Leading man Tupac Shakur sees it this way: "This movie is fresh. It's about people who don't accept the status quo, but don't turn to crime as the answer to getting ahead. It's about African-Americans who can exist without violence. It is time to get the word out that brothers can solve the problems of their lives without using a gun."

"Poetic Justice" was filmed mostly on location in the streets of south-central Los Angeles and up the California coastline in Cambria, San Mateo and Oakland.

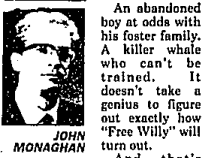
"Poetic Justice" opens Friday at these suburban movie theaters

— AMC Old Orchard, AMC Hills, United Artists Oakland, Star Rochester, United Artists 12
Wonderland, Showcase Auburn AMC Southfield City, Quo Vadis, Oaks and GCC Canton Cinema.



Street romance: Janet Jackson stars as Justice, a reclusive young woman who discovers a world she had never imagined on a road trip from south-central Los Angeles to Oakland in "Poetic Justice," a Columbia Pictures release.

'Free Willy': a bit corny but still good family fare



An abandoned boy at odds with his foster family. A killer whale who can't be trained. It doesn't take a genius to figure out exactly how "Free Willy" will turn out.

And, that's precisely what audiences were clapping about. Don't want your kids traumatized by "Jurassic Park" dinosaurs? Take them instead to this corny, harmless boy-meets-whale movie.

Willy and Jesse (Jason James Richter) are just strangers in the night when they first set eyes on each other. The troubled 12-year-old spray-paints graffiti on tanks at the faded North West Adventure Park when Willy, eerily lit through the transparent tank, scares him half to death.

Captured by police, Jesse must clean up his mess and, in doing so, grows more and more fascinated by the killer whale, or orca. He discovers that Willy refuses to

REVIEW

take commands and, as a result, won't have an appropriate-size tank built for him.

"Unfortunately, the people who run this place treat Willy like he's a commodity," says Rae (Lori Petty), the frustrated animal trainer.

Playing his harmonica by the tank one day, Jesse begins communicating with the whale. Soon he has Willy doing your standard Shamu-style stupid pet tricks — rolling over, catching fish in his cavernous mouth and waving goodbye with his tail.

Jesse also is a boy transformed. Still bitter about the mother who dumped him six years ago, he's warming up slightly to his infinitely patient foster parents played by Jayne Atkinson and Michael Madsen.

The droopy-eyed Madsen is a real surprise here. The Stepwolf Theater grad, best-known for offbeat performances in "Thelma and Louise" and "Reservoir

Dogs," brings depth to what should be a boring role.

He's got one especially good scene when he asks Jesse what he thinks the house rules should be. "I've always been better at breaking rules than making them," the foster father admits.

For his part, 12-year-old Richter registers appropriate levels of bitterness and wonder, even though he's a bit laughable when trying to act street-tough.

Atkinson and Petty, on the other hand, deliver their lines to the boy in the patronizing and patient tone that kids loathe. August Schullerberg, as the park handyman and philosopher, conjures up a bit of Native-American mysticism that makes the fantastical end of the movie a bit more plausible.

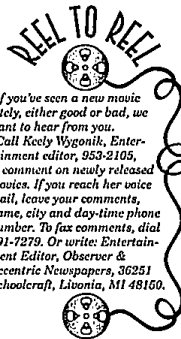
That conclusion almost brings an audience to its feet. As silly and predictable as it often becomes, "Free Willy" has already made a splash at the box office by providing safe summer family entertainment.

"Free Willy" is showing at these

suburban movie theaters: AMC Southfield City, Showcase Auburn Hills, Showcase Sterling Heights, AMC Laurel Park, GCC Novi Town Center, Showcase Dearborn, AMC Abbey, AMC America-

na West, GCC Canton, Showcase Pontiac, Showcase Westland, Star Rochester Hills and United Artists West River.

To leave a message for John Monaghan, dial 953-2047, mailbox number 1866, on a Touch-Tone phone, fax him a note at 591-7279, or write him in care of Entertainment, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.



If you've seen a new movie lately, either good or bad, we want to hear from you. Call Keely Wygonik, Entertainment editor, 953-2105, to comment on newly released movies. If you reach her voice mail, leave your comments, name, city and day-time phone number. To fax comments, dial 591-7279. Or write: Entertainment Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48160.

FILM CLIPS

"FREE WILLY"

Released by: Warner Bros.
Starring: Jason James Richter, Lori Petty, Jayne Atkinson, August Schullerberg and Michael Madsen
Directed by: Simon Waner
Produced by: Jennie Lew Tugend and Lauren Shuler-Donner
Screenplay by: Keith A. Walker and Corey Blechman
Rated: PG (Some material may not be suitable for pre-teenagers)
Running time: Two hours, three minutes
Rating (out of a possible four):



Family drama: Jesse (Jason James Richter) sees Willy (Keiko) respond to his harmonica in Warner Bros.' heartwarming family drama, "Free Willy."

Young ones! Parental units! We summon you!

DAN AYKROYD JANE CURTIN

CONEHEADS

PARAVOINT PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS A LOBBE PRODUCTIONS PRODUCTION A STEVE BARON FILM CONEHEADS
CASTING BY DANIEL WINDO BARBARA THOMPSON BOBBI BLUMER
COSTUME DESIGNER DAVID MORGAN
EDITED BY MARK FRANKLIN
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS GREGG FONZALE FRANK ROBERTY
PRODUCED BY MICHAEL BACHPHIL
SCREENPLAY BY TOM DAVENPORT
DIRECTED BY STEVE BARON
CASTING BY DANIEL WINDO BOBBI BLUMER BOBBI BLUMER
COSTUME DESIGNER DAVID MORGAN
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SCREENPLAY BY TOM DAVENPORT
DIRECTED BY STEVE BARON

STARTS FRIDAY, JULY 23RD	AMC AMERICAN WEST	
AMC BEL AIR 10	AMC LAUREL PARK	AMC SOUTHFIELD CITY
AMC STERLING CTR. 10	AMC WOODS 6	SHOWCASE HILLS
SHOWCASE PONTIAC	SHOWCASE STERLING HEIGHTS	SHOWCASE WESTLAND
STAR GRATIOT AT 15 MIL.	STAR LINCOLN PARK 8	STAR ROCHESTER HILLS
STAR TAYLOR	UNITED FAIRLANE	UNITED OAKLAND
UNITED 12 OAKS	UNITED WEST RIVER	FORD WYOHING DRIVE-IN