MOVIES

Spike Lee drops the ball in lame 'He Got Game'



worry Knicks' game), he habuld knew. So where does finaking a movie as shallow and, in the final analysis, hokey as "His over-two-hour saga follows a high school senior named Jesus (Ray Allen), whose title as

Spike Lee says the movies never get the game of basketball right. As a self-proclaimed hoops addict (you'll see him seated courtside at just about overy Knicks' game), he

top basketball prospect in the country ("Jesus Saves" the headlines scream) makes him a he property. His decision – play college ball and get an education or go straight to the pros – holds our interest for awhile before Spike drops the ball with the most forced melodrama imaginable.

"He Got Game" opens like a Spike-directed Nike commercial with kids nationwide shooting slow-motion hoops. There's the white farm bey practicing on makeshift court behind the barn, African-American kids under the mean semant to the head of the comment to the head of the comment to the head by the strains of ultra-American composer Aaron Copland.

Let's get one thing straight: I'm not a basketball fan and can't stand to see sports mythologized on the screen. I wasn't cray; about "Field of Droams" and despised 'The Natural." Still, I enjoyed this part of "Ho Got Game," if only for the visceral cinematography by Malik Hassan Sayced.

In his Nike commercials, Spike gets his message across in 30

In his Nike commercials, Spike gets his message across in 30 seconds. In the movie, he doesn't know when to say "cut" in the strained relationship between Jeaus and his father, Jake (Denzel Washington), who is serving time upstate for killing his wife, Jesus mether.

Jake has returned home on a mission. It seems the governor's

alma mater, Big State, is interested in Jesus so sends dad out to sign him up. Favors like this won't be forgetten, half-promises the warden (played by an evenjowlier-than-usual Ned Beatty).

the warden (played by an even-jowlier-than-usual Ned Beatty). Spike is a stute when he presents the forces trying to influence Jesus' decision. Everyone wants a piece of him. Universities offer him the moon, including dorm rooms full of frisky white coeds. On his return, Uncle Bubba (Bill Nunn) shows up in a brand new car. And just when you think that Jesus' white high school coach is really looking out for his best interests, he turns on him, too, pushing 10 grand in his face for a hint about his decision. (I just know Spike couldn't let this guy off the hook.)

"He Got Game" reunites Spike with Denzel Washington, the star of "Malcolm X," and it's a potentially meaty vole. But Spike does overything he can to sabotage the part, which here includes hooking Jake up with a white prestitute (Milla Josovich) redeemed by his newfound compassion.

Anyone is going to fare badly

white prestitute (Milla Javavich) redeemed by his newfound compassion.

Anyone is going to fare badly next to Washington, but Ray Allen looks especially out-of-his league during the volatile father-and-son confrontations. The real-life Milwaukee player (the 22) does look genuine when shooting basket after effortless basket in the scene where he and his old man finally square off on the court.

Some moments I liked, includ-ing John Turturro as a coach

Drama: Denzel Washington (left) stars as temporarily paroled prisoner Jake Shuttlesworth whose future depends on his being able to convince his estranged son Jesus (Ray Allen) to accept a basketball scholarship at the governor's alma mater in "He Got Game."

who stages a lavish production to lure Jesus to his university. The screen fills with Jesus' high-light clips intersporsed with adoring followers from nameless By the time we reach the end of 'He Got Game,' Spike goes all sappy on us again, junking the movie up with heavy-handed symbolism. When the audience

gave it a collective groan, I knew that I wasn't alone in my suspi-cions: "He's Got Game" had got-ten truly lame.

John Monaghan welcomes your calls and comments. To leave John a voice mail message, dial (734) 953-2047 on a touch-

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SCREEN SCENE

A sampling of what's playing at alternative movie theaters across metro Detroit as reviewed by John Monaghan.

Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward, Detroit. Call (313) 833-2235 for information (55.50; \$4.50 students/seniors)

"A Friend of the Deceased" (Ukroine -1997). Friday-Sunday, May S-10 (tell for shewtimes). A former academic, out of work in the new capitalist jungle of Kiew, discovers that his wife is cheating on him, When he hires a hitman to take care of her, his real problems have only just begun.

"Mother and Son" (Russin -1997). 730 p.m. Monday, May 11. Designed and paced like a fever dream, this work by Alexander Sakurov is a visual poem about a dying woman being cared for by her son.

Main Art Theatre - 118 N. Main (at 11 Mile Road), Royal Jak. Call (248) 542-0180 for nformation. (\$6.50; \$4 stu-lents/seniors and matinees; \$3

dents/seniors. and matineces; \$3 wilght)
"The Butcher Boy" (Ireland 1998). The movies of Neal Jordan ("Interview with the Vampire" and "The Crying Game") leave me as fascinated as they do cold. Expect the same here as social and emotional forces turn a vacuus boy into a killer.

young boy into a killer.

"The Big One" (USA - 1998).
The latest from Flint boy-made-

good Michael Moore ("Roger and Me") shot during his recent book tour. Along the way he confronts corporations who continue to downsize to the detriment of employees everywhere.

"The Spanish Prisoner" (USA - 1988). Campbell Scott plays a young businessman who develops a dangerous relationship with a mysterious tycono (Steve Martin). Expect plenty of fascinating verbal interplay in this latest film written and directed by David Mamet ("Clengarry Glen Ross").

Maple Art Theatre - Maple at Telegraph, Bloomfield. Call (248) 855-999 for information. (86.50; 84 before 6 p.m.)

"TwentyFour Seven" (Britain - 1997). Bob Hoskins plays a cackeyed optimist who tries to form a boxing club among the troubled youth that haunt the housing projects.

"Two Girls and a Guy" (USA - 1997). Shot in real time, this examination of a love triangle stars Robert Downey Jr., Heather Graham, and Natasha Gregson Wagner. Directed by James Toback.

"Deja Vu" (USA - 1998). Another talkfeat from writer/director Henry Jaglom, this time about the stranger relationship that can somatimes develop between stranger. Victoria Poyt co-wrote and stars with Stephen Dillane and Vanessa Redgrave.

Star Southfield - 23556 West
12 Mile (near Northwestern
Highway and Telegraph), Southfield, (87.05 St adults; 84.76 children/seniors before 6 p.m.)
"Suicide Kings" (USA 1989). Five Long Island prep students kidnap a former mafia
cape (Christopher Walken) in
exchange for one of the guys sistera. Denis Leary also stars in
this dark comedy.
Windsor Film Theatre 2136 Wyandoute Street, Windsor,
Canada. Call (519) 254-FiLM for
information, (85.25 Canadian; 84
US.)
"The Sweet Horeafter"
(Canada - 1997). 7 p.m. Thuraday, May 7; 9:15 p.m. FridaySunday May 8-10. Many thought
Atom Egeyan's gripping drama
was robbed of an Oscar. When
the children in a small northern
Canada town perish in a bus

was robace of an Oscari. Which children in a small northern Canada town perish in a bus accident, the parents and other survivors don't know where to place the blame.

"Wace: The Rules of Engagement" (USA - 1997).

9:16 p.m. Thursday, May 7; 7
p.m. Friday-Sunday, May 8-10. An Oscar-nominated documentry which beats up on the FBI for bungling the standoff with the Branch Davidians. Among the rare footage presented: A 1959 recruitment film touting the group's communal way of life and interviews with FBI members whose reasons for being in Waco appear questionable.

Scheduled to open Friday, May 8 "DEEP INPACT"
Sci-fi thriller tells how people on earth deal with an Impending collision with an asteroid.

"WOO"

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Exclusively at the Landmark Main Theetre. A story of passion and ambition
about a father and son locked in a struggle to destroy each other. Stars Fedja
van Huet.

van noct.

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Exclusively at the Main Art. Romantic melodrama of impossible cross-cultural love between a Brillish journelist and a former prostitute. "THE HORSE WHISPERER"
Based on Nicholas Evans' best-selling novel of a mother's quest to save her maimed daughter, and a horse driven

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Romantic comedy: Jada Pinkett Smith and Tommy Davidson star in "Woo."

mad by pain, Stars robert Redford.

SNOTING FISH
A fast-paced and infectious romp
through the territory of love, ingenuity
and revenge that updates the romantic
caper comedy.
**Scheduled to open Friday, May 20

COOTELA

An enormous creatura descends on New York City causing complete chaos.

Sters Matthew Broderick. Scheduled to open Wednesday, May 27

"1 907 THE MOK-UP"
Comody about two street entrepreneurs who are running a shopping center cut of their van. When they start dealing in bootleg cell phones they find themselves scrambling to stay sheed of

unhappy customers and the FBI.

Scheduled to open Friday, May 29 "HOPE TLOXE"
When a woman's picture perfect, life comes crashing down around her, she returns home to start over. There her life becomes even more complicated, but she finds the strength to receive the strength of the stre

ALMOST HEROES
ROllicking comedy about two explore who lead a band of hopeless and clive less misacherulers in a race to beat Lewis & Clark across the uncharted American West. Stors Chris Farley ar Matthew Guest.

