

Vampire movie's plot really bites

■ 'Queen of the Damned,' based on Anne Rice's novel, has a great soundtrack, but the plot leaves audiences wanting more

MOVIE REVIEW

'Queen of the Damned'

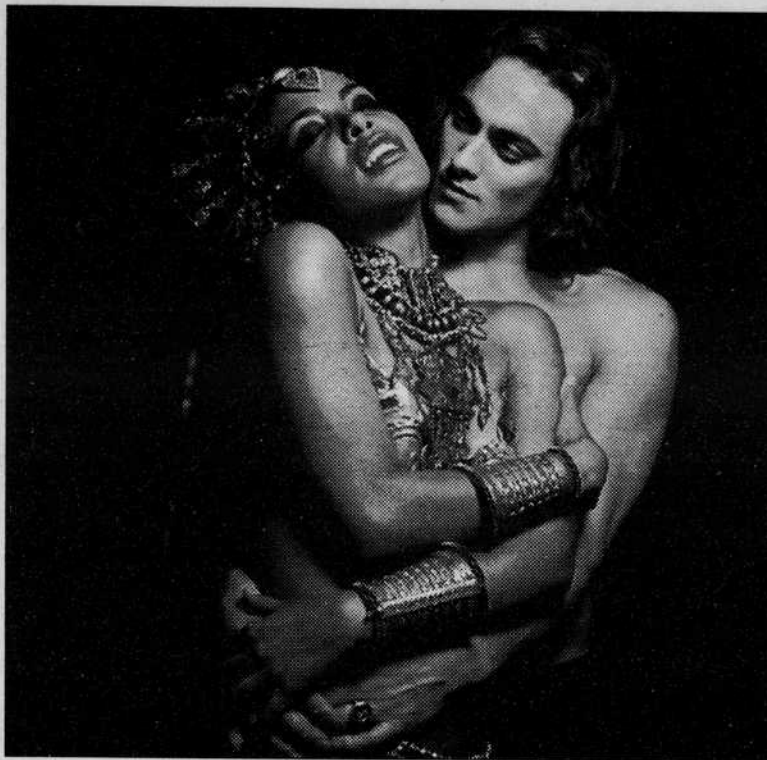
★★★★☆

By Lori Musicer
for the Emerald

"Queen of the Damned," the long-awaited sequel to Anne Rice's "Interview with a Vampire," managed to suck \$23.8 million out of moviegoers' wallets in its first two weeks — and it sucked hard.

The horror movie genre has become a casualty of corporate control, and this high-budget Warner Brothers release reeks of it. Without much of a pulse, "Queen" lacked character development, plot coherence, stand-out acting and originality. Much of this movie's audience comes from two groups: vampire-genre-junkie Rice fans, and those who want to see late R&B singer Aaliyah in her final role. Both groups will be disappointed. Rice fans will be disgusted at how cliché and inaccurate the movie is compared to her 1988 novel. Director Michael Rymer and screenwriters Scott Abbott and Michael Petroni took it upon themselves to rearrange, condense and basically hack the book. As for Aaliyah, she has the title role as Queen Akasha, the 6,000-year-old Egyptian mother of all vampires, but she doesn't show up until nearly an hour into the movie and only has about 15 minutes on screen.

This convoluted film, like so many before it, falls victim to the "we tried to pack a long, complicated novel into two hours on screen" trap. Since "Interview" in 1994, Tom Cruise managed to morph into Irish actor Stuart Townsend, who stars as 18th-century French nobleman-turned-vampire Lestat de Lioncourt. Lestat wakes from a century-long nap and decides to reveal his identity to humans by becoming a rock star. This angers the world's vampires, who have sworn



Courtesy photo

Late R&B singer Aaliyah plays the mother of all vampires in "Queen of the Damned" alongside Stuart Townsend, who stars as vampire-turned-rock-star Lestat. In a honeymoon ritual, they suck each other's blood in a marble bath filled with rose petals.

to hide their identities from mortals. Lestat intentionally baits his fellow undead to attend his one and only Death Valley concert. Meanwhile, young mortal Jesse Reeves, played by Marguerite Moreau (from "The Mighty Ducks"), is a member of a dark-forces record-keeping group who becomes a vampire groupie after discovering Lestat's diary.

After an ages-long slumber, blood-crazed Akasha decides it's time to reclaim her throne and to make Lestat her king — she likes his style. Aaliyah's super-hyped role provides the real tragedy of the film. The 22-year-old, who made her film debut in 2000's "Romeo Must Die," was killed in an August 2001 plane crash in the Bahamas. In "Queen," her metal breastplate, elaborate headdress and bronze body paint are pleasant on the eyes, and her immense power is impressive. With a smooth hand motion, she charbroils other vampires, and she can even venture into the daylight. But the script is mediocre. Akasha has drab lines such as "Kill her," "See how he obeys," and "You are bold, like your music," all

spoken in an electronic, supernatural voice with an eerie, yet cheesy Transylvanian accent. If people really want to honor Aaliyah's accomplishments, they should focus on her original medium.

The cinematography has its ups at times, including some interesting "Matrix"-style effects, beautiful goth scenery and combusting vampires. But the movie was unnecessarily gory in a Hollywood-marketed way. The highlight of "Queen" definitely lies in the music, written by Richard Gibbs and Korn frontman Jonathan Davis. Davis sings Lestat's songs for him in the movie. However, Davis does not appear on the soundtrack, but other big names in the hard rock/metal scene play his songs on it. Some contributors include Static-X, Disturbed, Deftones and Marilyn Manson. The music, dark and pain-filled, is a perfect fit for a modern vampire flick.

However, it's still not enough to save the movie from damnation.

Lori Musicer is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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SWEDEN	PARENTAGE	
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STUART	LITTLE	
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IRE	TOT	VIC ELI
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entertainment calendar

Thursday, March 7
7:30 p.m. — **Ralph Nader**, (lecture and discussion), McDonald Theatre, 1010 Willamette St., seated — \$10 general public, \$5 students, standing room — \$7 general public, \$3 students.
8 p.m. — **"Reckless"** (theater), University Theatre, Villard Hall, \$6, 346-4363.
8:30 p.m. — **Tempest**, Wild Duck Music Hall, 169 W. Sixth Ave., \$10.
9 p.m. — **Darryl Cherney, Robert Hoyt** (radical folk), Sam Bond's Garage, 407 Blair Blvd., \$5.
9:30 p.m. — **All-star Jazz Jam**, Jo Federigo's, 259 E. Fifth Ave. \$2, 343-8488.
10 p.m. — **Bindaas, Walker T Ryan, Irene Ferrera, Barbara Healey** (benefit party for Lane County Pacific Greens), Cafe Paradiso, \$8 general admission, \$5 with ticket stub from Ralph Nader discussion at McDonald Theatre.
Friday, March 8
8 p.m. — **"Reckless"** (theater), University Theatre, Villard Hall, \$6, 346-4363.
9:30 p.m. — **Syrus Jones, Mosaic, What Yo Mama Warned You About** (funky rock), Wild Duck, \$6, 485-3825.
9:30 p.m. — **Dana Lyons, Danny**

Dolinger, (radical folk), Sam Bond's, \$5, 431-6603.
Saturday, March 9
6 p.m. — **Ken Zimmerman** leads a discussion of the making of the collaborative novel "Caverns" with six members of Ken Kesey's University of Oregon Creative Writing class that took part in the writing of the book (as "O.U. Levon"), Tsunami Books, free.
8 p.m. — **"Reckless"** (theater), University Theatre, \$6, 346-4363.
9 p.m. — **Michael D. Memorial**, (reggae), WOW Hall, \$5.
9 p.m. — **Spiritfarm**, (acoustic), Cafe Paradiso, \$7.
9:30 p.m. — **Hot Club Sandwich, Jon Dee Graham** (jazz and rock), Sam Bond's, \$5.
Sunday, March 10
7:30 p.m. — **Caran Casey and Band** (Irish), Cafe Paradiso, \$17.50 advance, \$20 at the door.
8:30 p.m. — **Project/Object, Ike Willis, Napoleon Murphy Brock** (tribute to Frank Zappa), WOW Hall, \$14 advance, \$16 at the door.
9 p.m. — **Mark Alan** (acoustic guitar and vocals), Jo Federigo's, \$3.
Tuesday, March 12
7 p.m. — **"Happy Together"** (international film), Pacific Hall Keithan Student Lounge, free.
8 p.m. — **Arditti String Quartet** (chamber music), Beall Concert Hall, \$10-\$25.
8 p.m. — **Le Tigre, Chicks on Speed, Tami Hart** (punk rock), \$12 advance, \$14 door.
10 p.m. — **What Yo Momma Warned You About** (jazz/blues), Taylor's Bar and Grill, 894 E. 13th, \$4.
Wednesday, March 13
7 p.m. — **"Dance Quarterly"** (student dance concert), Gerlinger Annex Dougherty Dance Theatre, free.
8 p.m. — **University Campus Band** (ensemble concert), Beall Concert Hall, free.
8:30 p.m. — **Justin King** (acoustic guitar), Cafe Paradiso, \$5.
9 p.m. — **The Reputation (w/ Elizabeth Elmore of Sarge), Captain vs. Crew, The Velvet Teen** (rock 'n' roll), EMU Fir Room, \$3 students, \$4 general.

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