

Karma

Final retribution.

NEVER DIE ALONE: Directed by Ernest R. Dickerson. Written by James Gibson, based on the novel by Donald Goines. Produced by Alessandro Camon, Earl Simmons. Executive producers, Cameron Casey, Angelo Ellerebee, Dion Fearon, Marc Gerald, Edward R. Pressman, Rudy 'Kato' Rangel, John Schmidt. Original music by Damon 'Grease' Blackman, DMX, George Duke. Cinematography, Matthew Libatique. Editor, Stephen Lovejoy. Production design, Christiaan Wagener. Costumes, Marie France. Starring David Arquette, DMX, Clifton Powell, Reagan Gomez-Preston and Michael Ealy. Fox Searchlight Films, 2004. R. 90 minutes.

Given that the genre calls for gun fights, stabbings and other forms of terminal violence; an abundance of attitude; lots of hard drugs, pimps and whores; as well as loud hip-hop and gangsta' rap, *Never Die Alone* diverges only slightly from the predictable path, primarily because the storytelling is strong, personal and told in an authentic voice.

Credit the compelling, cinematic quality of the film to director Ernest Dickerson (*Juice*, *Bones*), cinematographer for Spike Lee's earlier films and a former fellow student at NYU film school. Dickerson was drawn to the popular novels of African American writer Donald Goines, whose books are the most-requested among prisoners across the country. When he learned Goines' work had never been adapted to the screen, Dickerson knew what he wanted to do for his sixth feature film: the tale of the rise and fall of a street gangster called King

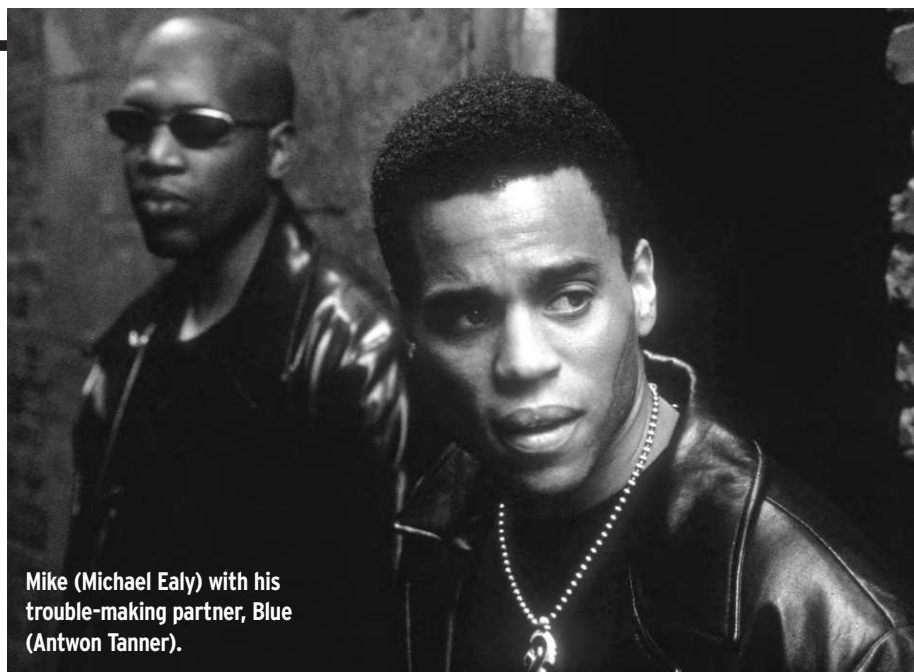
David (DMX), written by Goines in 1974.

Goines was a stylist and a natural storyteller. He lived the life, as they say. Once while in prison, he tried writing Westerns, which didn't work for him. But the urban LA street scene of the 1970s, bingo! Goines turned out 16 pulp novels in five years, including *Dopefiend* ('71), about a middle-class woman who becomes a drug abuser; *Black Girl Lost* ('73), about a teenage girl who sells drugs; and *Daddy Cool* ('74), about a man trying to keep his daughter from prostitution. The last is the basis for the next film Dickerson wants to make.

King David has come back to LA to make up for his past. First order of business is to settle his debt to Moon (Clifton Powell), the drug kingpin whose thugs enforce his orders. King David's sleek pimpmobile takes him to one of Moon's clubs, where the bartender, Juanita (Reagan Gomez-Preston), remembers David too well to be glad to see him. Mike (Michael Ealy) also remembers him without fondness.

And sitting at Juanita's bar the day King David comes by is Paul (David Arquette), a white writer, who yearns to become an investigative journalist. Paul's living in the neighborhood to soak up local color, and he is fascinated by King David, who talks to Moon and sets up an appointment for later. Paul overhears the deal and comes back to the bar that night to see for himself King David's meeting with Moon's men.

The players are set in motion, and the drama begins to play out in interesting and surprising ways. Moon picks Mike and his



Mike (Michael Ealy) with his trouble-making partner, Blue (Antwon Tanner).

FOX SEARCHLIGHT FILMS, 2004.

scattershot partner, Blue (Antwon Tanner), to pick up the money. Afterward, Paul finds his part in the encounter surprising, while Mike mostly surprises himself. But Mike also knows the white guy at the bar saw everything. And maybe Moon knows, too.

I'm not persuaded that *Never Die Alone* breaks much new ground, but it enlarges the genre by adding a new voice: Donald Goines. Narrowly, Goines' point of view reminds me of Walter Mosley's authorial voice in the 1995 film directed by Carl Franklin, *Devil in a Blue Dress*, who was a new voice to me. But don't get the idea Goines' voice is like Mosley's, or that there's any similarity between Denzel Washington's character,

Easy Rawlins, and any character in *Never Die Alone*.

Although, come to think of it, Easy's kill-happy buddy, played by the seriously underrated Don Cheadle, might find affinity with some of Goines' thugs, even though they aren't as smart as he is. Except for Mike, played with an Easy-like deliberation and reserve by the talented and complicated Ealy, the real star of both *Barbershops* But the perceived similarity is most likely LA itself. In the city of discontents, dope-dealers will go to great lengths to hold on to the comforts they've acquired. It's a material world.

Never Die Alone is probably a short-timer. Catch it at Cinemark. **EW**

movie clips

OPENING OR RETURNING:

Dream Factory, The: Chinese film directed by Feng Xiaogang. At 4 pm on 04/07 in 115 Pacific Hall, UO campus. Free.

Dreamers, The: Bernardo Bertolucci's film, set during the Paris uprising of 1968, stars Michael Pitt, Eva Green and Louis Garrel as three young cineastes who hole up in their apartment and play sex and movie games. It's a beautiful reminder that youthful dreams may not change the ways of the world, but they may forever alter the dreamers. Very highest recommendations. NC-17. Bijou. **See review this issue.**

Emerald Forest, The (1985): Young boy is taken by Amazon natives. Directed by John Boorman, it stars his son, Charley, as the boy. Based on a true story, film is beautifully shot in the jungles of Brazil. Stirring portrait of vanishing tribes. R. At 7 pm on 04/07 in 100 Willamette Hall, UO campus. Free.

Faust Faustus in Deptford: This 15-minute digital video, which has been shown at international independent film festivals, will be shown as part of a lecture by UO art professor Leon Johnson. Free. At 8 pm on 04/08 in 115 Lawrence Hall, UO campus.

Hellboy: Based on Mike Mignola's Dark Horse Comics series, this supernatural action adventure stars Ron Perlman, John Hut, Selma Blair and Doug Jones and is directed by Guillermo del Toro. PG-13. Cinema World. Cinemark.

Home on the Range: Disney animated feature voices by Roseanne Barr, Judi Dench, Jennifer Tilly, Cuba Gooding Jr., Randy Quaid, Steve Buscemi, Carolee Cook and Governor Ann Richards., while singing comes from k.d. lang, Bonnie Raitt, Tim McGraw and The Beau Sisters. PG. Cinemark.

Miracle: The: 1980 US Ice Hockey team beat the greatest team in the world, the Russians, at the Olympics. Stars Kurt Russell as the coach of this inspiring tale of a sports-world miracle. PG. Movies 12.

Prince and Me, The: Stars Julia Stiles, Luke Mably. She's a pre-med student. He's the Crown Prince of Denmark. Also stars James Fox and Miranda Richardson. PG. Cinemark. Cinema World.

Road to Life: At 8:45 pm on 04/06 in 115 Pacific Hall, UO campus. In Russian with English subtitles. Free.

Statement, The: Brian Moore's novel about a WWII war crime, directed by Norman Jewison, stars Michael Caine, Tilda Swinton, Jeremy Northam, and the late Alan Bates. *The New York Times* says: "As much as these wonderful actors invest their performances with psychological nuance, their efforts go mostly for naught in a movie that gives character development a distant back seat to the grinding mechanics of its formulaic plot." R. Bijou.

Walking Tall: Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson returns home after military career to find his hometown overrun with crime, drugs and violence. He's elected sheriff to shut down his former rival's

criminal biz. Directed by Kevin Bray. PG-13. Cinema World. Cinemark.

Weather Underground: To be shown as part of "Social Movements Then and Now" program, documentary directed by Sam Green and Bill Siegel looks back at the 1960s and '70s when young activists such as Bill Ayers, Bernadine Dohrn, Mark Rudd and others tried to bring the Vietnam War home to the streets of this country. Learn what these people discovered about the use of violence and what they have to say today. Highly recommended. NR. At 7 pm on 04/02 in 180 PLC, UO campus. Free. **Online archives.**

Films open the Friday following EW publication date unless otherwise noted. See archived reviews at www.eugeneweekly.com

CONTINUING:
Agent Cody Banks 2 Destination London: Frankie Muniz returns as spy Cody Banks, this time he's undercover in London as a student at an elite boarding school. PG. Cinemark.

Along Came Polly: Ben Stiller plays Reuben, a hapless husband whose bride dumps him. Then he meets up with a childhood friend, Polly (Jennifer Aniston). Also stars Philip Seymour Hoffman, Hank Azaria, Bryan Brown and Alec Baldwin. John Hamburg directs. PG-13. Movies 12.

Butterfly Effect: The trailer is about a young man (Ashton Kutcher) who time travels back to the past to fix the broken lives of a childhood girlfriend (Amy Smart) and his friends, Lenny (Eldoan Henson) and Tommy (William Lee Scott). R. Movies 12.

Calendar Girls: Spunky members of a woman's club in Yorkshire, England poses naked to raise money for medical research after one's husband gets leukemia. Stars Helen Mirren, Julie Walters and John Alderton. Based on a true story. Nigel Cole directs. PG-13. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

Cheaper by the Dozen: Steve Martin and Bonnie Hunt play the parents of 12 children, including Piper Perabo, Hilary Duff and Tom Welling. Directed by Shawn Levy. PG. Movies 12.

Company, The: Robert Altman's dream of a dance movie stars the Joffrey Ballet of Chicago, Neve Campbell, Malcolm McDowell. One of Altman's most relaxed yet highly observant films. He "gets" dance, and *The Company* shows it. Highly recommended. PG-13. Bijou. **Online archives.**

Dawn of the Dead: Remake of George Romero's 1978 cult classic about a shopping mall taken over by those trying to survive a zombie plague. Unlikely stars: the excellent Sarah Polley (*My Life Without Me*) and Ving Rhames. R. Cinemark.

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind: Highly acclaimed film directed by Michel Gondry from screenplay by Charlie Kaufman (*Adaptation*). Stars Jim Carrey, Kate Winslet, Tom Wilkinson, with Mark Ruffalo, Elijah Wood, Kirsten Dunst. Carrey

discovers Winslet had memories of their relationship erased. Now he wants to do the same. Or does he? The best new film of '04. Very highest recommendations. R. Cinema World. Cinemark. **Online archives.**

Haunted Mansion: Eddie Murphy stars in Rob Minkoff's (*Stuart Little*) ghost comedy, with Jennifer Tilly, Don Knotts, Terence Stamp. PG. Movies 12.

Hidalgo: Based on autobiography of distance rider Frank T. Hopkins, played by Viggo Mortensen, this epic action-adventure takes place during a 3,000 mile survival race across the Arabian Desert in 1890. PG-13. Cinemark.

House of Sand and Fog: Vadim Perelman's adaptation of Andre Dubus III's novel loses something essential in the process. Jennifer Connelly stars. 2004 Academy Award contender for actor, Ben Kingsley; supporting actress, Iranian star Shohreh Aghdashloo; original score, James Horner. Despite its flaws, the film is worth seeing. R. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

Jersey Girl: Written and directed by Kevin Smith, film's about a music publicist (Ben Affleck) trying to balance work and fatherhood as a single parent. Also stars Jennifer Lopez, George Carlin, Liv Tyler, Jason Biggs. Raquel Castro is his independent daughter. PG-13. Cinemark. Cinema World.

Ladykillers, The: Based on the 1955 British comedy starring Peter Sellers and Alec Guinness, Ethan and Joel Coen's adaptation stars Tom Hanks and Marlon Wayons. When these bank robbers move into "no hip-hop" house of a Southern

church-going woman, anything goes. R. Cinema World. Cinemark.

Last Samurai, The: Edward Zwick directs this action-adventure starring Tom Cruise as a bitter Civil War vet in China to train emperor's troops to defeat samurais. Captured by warrior Katsumoto (Ken Watanabe), he learns Samurai traditions and code of honor. 2003 Academy Award noms: Watanabe, Supporting Actor; art direction; sound mixing; costume design. R. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

Lord of the Rings: Return of the King: Peter Jackson's stunning work stars Elijah Wood, Viggo Mortensen, Sean Astin, Ian McKellen, Billy Boyd, Orlando Bloom, Liv Tyler, Cate Blanchett. Frodo and Sam make it to Mount Doom as Aragorn leads the warriors of Middle Earth in the final battle against Sauron. 2003 Academy Award sweeps for Best Picture; Director, Peter Jackson; adapted screenplay; art direction; sound mixing; original score; original song; costume design; film editing; makeup; and visual effects. Very highest recommendations. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

Master and Commander The Far side of the World: Peter Weir brings Patrick O'Brian's best-selling nautical adventures during the Napoleonic era to the screen, with Russell Crowe as Captain Jack Aubrey and Paul Bettany as Dr. Stephen Maturin, ship surgeon and naturalist. Very highest recommendations. Academy Awards for cinematography, sound editing; nominated for picture; director; art direction; sound mixing; costume design; film editing; makeup; visual

effects. PG-13. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

Never Die Alone: Ernest Dickerson's new film stars DMX as King David, a criminal seeking redemption who finds death, and David Arquette as the journalist who learns his whole story. Also stars Michael Ealy, Reagan Preston-Gomez. R. Cinemark. **See review this issue.**

Nirvana: Concert 1994: LateNite Bijou.

Passion of Christ, The (2004): Mel Gibson film opens amid charges (denied) of anti-Semitism. A.O. Scott of *The New York Times* writes, "The Passion of the Christ" is so relentlessly focused on the savagery of Jesus' final hours that this film seems to arise less from love than from wrath, and to succeed more in assaulting the spirit than in uplifting it." Others call the graphic torture unwatchable. R. Cinemark. Cinema World.

Peter Pan: Directed by P.J. Hogan, movie stars Jason Isaacs, Jeremy Sumpter, Richard Briers, Olivia Williams, Lyn Redgrave, Ludvine Sagnier and Rachel Hurd-Wood. PG. Movies 12.

Scooky Doo 2 Monsters Unleashed: Some scary action, rude humor and language. PG. Cinemark. Cinema World.

Secret Window: Psychotic (John Turturro) stalks writer (Johnny Depp), accusing him of stealing the ending to his story. David Koepp directs, story by Stephen King. Also stars Maria Bello, Timothy Hutton, Charles S. Dutton. PG-13. Cinemark.

Something's Gotta Give: Directed by Nancy Meyers. Harry Sanborn (Jack Nicholson) is a New York music mogul

with a young libido, while Diane Keaton is a writer with more on her mind than sex. With Amanda Peet, Frances McDormand and Keanu Reeves. 2003 Academy Award nomination for Keaton. PG-13. Movies 12. **Online archives.**

Starsky and Hutch: Ben Stiller is uptight Starsky, while Owen Wilson is laid back Ken "Hutch" Hutchinson in this remake of TV's undercover crime-fighters. With Vince Vaughn, Snoop Dogg, Juliette Lewis. PG-13. Cinemark.

Taking Lives: All-star cast includes Angelina Jolie, Ethan Hawke, Keifer Sutherland, Olivier Martinez and Jean-Hughes Anglade. Directed by D.J. Caruso, this thriller is about a serial killer who steals his victims' identities. R. Cinemark.

Two Thousand One 2001: A Space Odyssey: Stanley Kubrick's classic futuristic film from 1968 follows astronauts on a space voyage to Jupiter that's been taken over by a computer, HAL 9000, which they must stop. Beautiful special effects and Kubrick's choice of music add to film's mystical appeal. Not rated. LateNite Bijou.

Win a Date with Tad Hamilton: Kate Bosworth, Tophér Grace and Josh Duhamel star in this teen romance comedy directed by Robert Luketic. PG-13. Movies 12..

**Bijou Art Cinemas (686-2458)
Cinema World 8 (342-6536)
Cinemark 17 (746-5202)
Movies 12 (741-1231)**

Video Clips

NEW RELEASES ON VIDEO

Releases subject to change. Available the Tuesday following date of EW publication, sometimes sooner. See archived movie reviews at www.eugeneweekly.com

Cheaper by the Dozen: Steve Martin and Bonnie Hunt play the parents of 12 children, including Piper Perabo, Hilary Duff and Tom Welling. Directed by Shawn Levy. PG. Movies 12.

Grapes of Wrath (1940): John Ford's Depression Era classic based on John Steinbeck's novel stars Henry Fonda, John Carradine Jane Darwell as members of the Joad family, who leave their Dust Bowl farm for California. Digitally enhanced and restored. DVD extras: Restoration comparison and commentary by film scholar and Steinbeck scholar; original theatrical trailer, still gallery, Movie Tone News footage. (Fox Studio Classics).

Hope Springs (2003) Stars Colin Firth, Minnie Driver, Mary Steenburgen, Heather Graham, Oliver Platt.

Kristin Lavransdatter (Norway, 1995): Based on best-selling trilogy about life in medieval Norway, film is directed by Liv Ullmann. Norwegian, with English subtitles. DVD interview with Ullmann.

Matrix Revolutions (2003): Keanu Reeves, Laurence Fishburne and Carrie-Anne Moss are back for the third (and final?) Matrix episode. Written and directed by the Wachowski Brothers. Produced by Joel Silver. R.

Meet Me in St. Louis (1944): Part of DVD release of Vincente Minnelli films, this beauty stars Judy Garland, Margaret O'Brien, Mary Astor in a great musical celebration of the 1903 World's Fair. National Film Registry, 1994, NR.

My Family (1994): Gregory Nava directs Jimmy Smits, Esai Morales, Eduardo Lopez Vargas, Lupe Ontiveros, Jennifer Lopez, Edward James Olmos, Michael De Lorenzo, Mary Steenburgen in this multigenerational saga of an LA family over 60 years. R.

Passionada: Set in the Portuguese-American community of New Bedford, Mass., film stars Sophia Milos, Emmy Rossum, Lupe Ontiveros, Teresa Russell, Seymour Cassel. Happy ending. PG-13.

Room with a View (1986): Merchant-Ivory-Jhbvala adaptation of E.M. Forster's novel star Daniel Day Lewis, Julian Sands, Helena Bonham Carter, Maggie Smith, Judi Dench, Denhold Elliot, Simon Callow, Rupert Graves. Very highest recommendations. DVD extras include commentary by Ivory, Callow, Merchant, cinematographer; interviews with Day-Lewis and Callow; 30th anniversary Merchant-Ivory tribute.

Sherman's March (1986): Documentary of Ross McElwee's unintentionally autobiographical film follows what Videohound calls "his disastrous quest for love." His family meddles, the women he meets are melodramatic, and he's unflinchingly neurotic. Wonderful.

Next week: Booty Call, Casa de los Babys, Kill Bill I, Tokyo Godfathers and The Velocity of Gary.