

'Beasts of the Southern Wild'

continued from page 11

name for the backwater Louisiana bayou they call home).

Hers is not the annoyingly precocious arrogance of many movie children, but an inspiring, though childlike, sense of her life's purpose and meaning. When she talks of her community's struggles after a decimating Katrina-like storm, she notes their recognition that "it wasn't no time to sit around crying like a bunch of babies." And facing recurrent dangers, she notes that "me and my daddy, we stay right here. We's who the earth is for." Hushpuppy has learned from Wink to expect struggle, and both are going about equipping her to embrace it.

Hushpuppy personifies the challenges of her life in the form of Aurochs, huge and mythical creatures depicted in cave drawings which she believes are coming with the melting of polar icecaps.

I love that the film balances gritty realism with a form of mythical storytelling that captures the import of the community's struggle to survive. The Aurochs seem to signify the dangers that confront not just Hushpuppy and her community, but all humanity--the encroachment of modernity, or environmental disaster, or economic devastation; the loss of health and independence.

As Hushpuppy recognizes, "The whole universe depends on everything fitting together just right. If one piece busts, even the smallest piece, the entire universe will get busted." And she has learned to focus her fierceness on doing what she can to maintain her part of that essential balance. So when the film culminates in an actual face-off between Hushpuppy and the Aurochs, the impact is profound, as she registers something of the true

nature of heroic human striving.

Make no mistake; there is real wisdom in Hushpuppy's narration. "When it all goes quiet behind my eyes," she declares, "I see everything that made me flying around in invisible pieces. I see that I'm a little piece of a big, big universe." We should all live with this kind of wild clarity and determination.

There are a couple more things worth noting. This film contains an ideal of beauty that resides in a universe more rustic and more evolved than the Hollywood ideal. Its women, including the wise herbalist and a group of prostitutes who emerge to shelter Hushpuppy and her friends as they are longing for maternal comfort, shimmer with refreshing earthiness and warmth. The earth is depicted not with airbrushed smoothness, but as a teeming mass of savage and glorious vitality.

Finally, without glamorizing or fetishizing their poverty, the film captures something of the beauty and largess of the disenfranchised, and depicts how efforts of outsiders to help them may end up doing actual harm.

Never has a film captured so well the biblical sense that the poor and marginalized have a kind of wisdom that the world desperately needs, a wisdom that should be accorded reverence.

Buoyed by joyous music grounded in the bayou and by cinematography that finds beauty even in squalor, first-time director Benh Zeitlin and his co-writer Lucy Alibar have delivered here a piece of filmmaking that we as a culture may need to evolve a bit to recognize.

I felt my own soul expand in the act of watching and absorbing it. And that's the stuff of greatness.

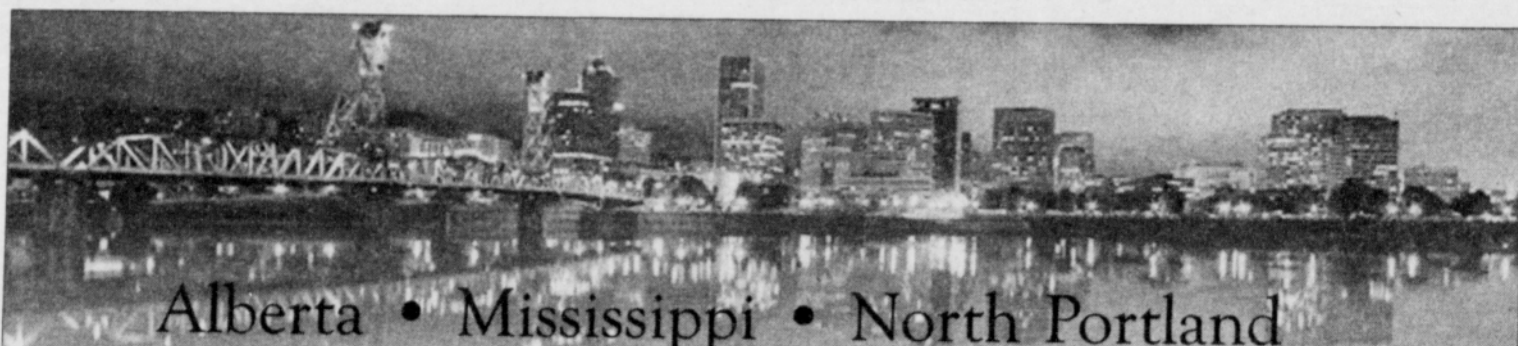
Easter Jazz 

A Jazz-Gospel Worship Service
in celebration of **Easter**

will be held at **Augustana Lutheran Church**
The location is **2710 NE 14th Ave., Portland**
on **Sunday, March 31 at 6 pm.**

Ron Steen, Kevin Deitz and George Mitchell will be performing with Marilyn Keller on vocals.

For more, call **503 288-6174.**
All are welcome to this free event.



Alberta • Mississippi • North Portland
Vancouver • East County • Beaverton

The Portland Observer



City of Roses

CAREER & EDUCATION SPECIAL EDITION

Portland Observer 41 years

Dreams and Uncertain Futures
Students face job prospects with hope, fear

Portland Peace Prize for an Unsung Hero
Jefferson students shine light on community leaders

Serving the Portland Metro Area

Committed to Cultural Diversity

4747 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Email: ads@portlandobserver.com Web: www.portlandobserver.com
Phone: 503.288.0033 Fax: 503 288-0015

THE LAW OFFICES OF Patrick John Sweeney, P.C.

Patrick John Sweeney
Attorney at Law

1549 SE Ladd
Portland, Oregon

Portland: (503) 244-2080
Hillsboro: (503) 244-2081
Facsimile: (503) 244-2084
Email: Sweeney@PDXLawyer.com

To Place Your Classified Advertisement

Contact:
Phone: 503-288-0033
Fax: 503-288-0015
e-mail: classifieds@portlandobserver.com