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DVD Review: 'Joyful Noise'

Musical film features Dolly and Latifah in gospel-driven dramedy fun for the whole family

By Kam Williams
Special to *The Skanner News*

When choir director Bernard Sparrow (Kris Kristofferson) passes away unexpectedly, Pastor Dale (Courtney B. Vance) finds himself on the horns of a dilemma. Should he promote the dearly-departed deacon's assistant, Vi Rose Hill (Queen Latifah), or award the position to his grieving widow, G.G. (Dolly Parton)?

After agonizing over the decision, the rev settles on the former, potentially risking the survival of

answer to the prayers of Pastor Dale who is desperate to avoid creating a rift in his tight-knit congregation. For, he hopes that the choir might restore a measure of pride to the beleaguered Pacashau community by prevailing at the upcoming National Gospel Competition.

That unlikely feat is the raison d'être of "Joyful Noise," a faith-based mix of morality play and musical numbers. The soulful singing performances are the film's forte, from Dolly Parton and Kris Kristofferson's heartfelt duet on "From Here to the Moon and Back" to Keke Palmer and



A modern parable that's fun for the whole family with an uplifting message about the power of cooperation.

Sacred Divinity, since the well-to-do Sparrow family is the cash-strapped Church's major benefactor. By comparison, life's a struggle for Vi Rose and most of the other citizens of Pacashau, Georgia. The economic recession has turned the once-thriving town into a decaying metropolis marked by foreclosure signs, a soup kitchen packed with the homeless, and a business district dotted with vacant storefronts.

G.G.'s grudgingly ratifying the appointment of Vi Rose is the

Jeremy Jordan's equally-evocative interpretation of "Maybe I'm Amazed" to Ivan Kelley, Jr.'s spirited rendition of "That's the Way God Planned It."

As for the pat plotline, the point of departure finds Vi Rose trying to raise two teenagers alone because her husband (Jesse L. Martin) abandoned the family for the military on account of the lack of local jobs. Their son, Walter (Dexter Darden), is in need of help handling his Asperger's Syndrome while boy-crazy daughter, Olivia (Palmer), sure could use a more

appropriate suitor than the thug (Paul Woolfolk) who's been courting her lately.

Everything changes the day G.G.'s Prodigal Grandson Randy (Jordan) rolls back into town from New York City unexpectedly. Although a little rough around the edges, the misunderstood young man is just the answer for everybody's malady.

First, he falls in love with Olivia at first sight. Then he serves as a

surrogate big brother to Walter. And when he joins the choir, it's only a matter of time before he mends the fences between Vi Rose and his granny on the road to the finals at the Joyful Noise contest in Los Angeles.

A modern parable that's fun for the whole family with an uplifting message about the power of cooperation. Can I get an Amen?

Very Good (2.5 stars)

Rated PG-13 for profanity and a sexual reference.

Running time: 118 minutes
Distributor: Warner Home Entertainment Group

Blu-ray/DVD Combo Pack
Extras: Make Some Noise; Leading Ladies; Spotlight on a Song: Dolly Parton's "From Here to the Moon"; Inspiration of Joyful Noise; "He's Everything" Live; four extended songs; and deleted scenes.

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5-2-12

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4-25-12



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