

FILM REVIEW: 'Moonlight' an Artful Tale of Sexual Repression



'Moonlight' tells the story of a young man's coming of age

By **Dwight Brown**
NNPA Newswire Film Critic

In just his second feature film, "Moonlight," writer/director Barry Jenkins tells a compelling story about sexual repression and ambiguity through the eyes of a vulnerable and confused little boy, who grows up to question his sexual identity as a teen and then finds a thin measure of serenity as a young man.

Based on Tarell McCraney's theater piece,

“Filmmaker Barry Jenkins is an artist. That's evident in the visually arresting way he shot the film

"In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue," the film is set in Miami's Liberty City, a thriving middle class African American community in the '40s and '50s that became a lower income neighborhood after the 1960s. The story unfolds in three chapters, three stages in life when emotional and psychological development are crucial for anybody, especially inner-city males.

Little (Alex Hibbert) is a scrawny kid, growing up in a neighborhood where crime is rampant and much of it is attached to drugs. He has no dad. His mom Paula (Naomie Harris, "Skyfall," "28 Days Later") is a nurse who struggles with crack addiction. On a day when he's being chased by bullies, the extremely withdrawn youngster meets Juan (Mahershala Ali, "Free State of Jones," "House of Cards"), a local drug dealer. The two hit it off. Juan becomes a surrogate dad, bringing Little home to meet his girlfriend Teresa (singer Janelle Monáe). The couple and Little's best friend Kevin (Jaden Piner) are the only stabilizing forces in his life.

The boy, as a teen, is

called Chiron (Ashton Sanders). His best friend is still Kevin (Jharrel Jerome). They've come to a fork in the road, taking two opposite directions, so they think. Chiron is a confused gay adolescent. Kevin is a seemingly very straight kid with a long list of ad hoc sexual conquests. When Chiron is harassed by homophobic schoolmates, in the most public and embarrassing ways, he reaches a breaking point.

As the adolescent Chiron becomes a twenty-something young

man, he is known by the name Black (Trevante Rhodes). He's adapted. He's the alpha dog drug lord in his neighborhood. He has a calm manner. A bit more assured, yet still very internal. He's learned from Juan that the he can survive, be tough, and yet still be humane. His relationship with his mom is estranged. Kevin is off somewhere else. On the outside Black looks like a cool reserved brother, but on the inside something is not fulfilled.

Filmmaker Barry Jenkins is an artist. That's evident in the visually arresting way he shot the film with the aid of cinematographer (James Laxton). First, opening scenes depict dealers on the street being interrogated by their boss. The camera swirls around them like a bee preparing to sting. Second, Juan takes Little to the beach to teach him to swim. The vision of the burly man holding a very skinny boy in his arms as he floats him on top of the water is reminiscent of paintings of Jesus being immersed in the River Jordan by John the Baptist. Third, a dalliance Chiron has at a beach

is more memorable because it isn't graphic. The camera just focuses on a hand making circles in the sand. It's a poetic moment.

Jenkins also intuitively develops the relationships between the boy and his extended family. The scenes between Juan and Little, two totally disparate characters, exhibit a nurturing that is rarely depicted in films focusing on innercity life. In one scene Little asks: "What's a faggot?" Juan answers: "A word used to make gay people feel bad." The relationship between Kevin and Chiron is also very tastefully delineated. Just enough

to make audiences wish the two could work out their differences.

The connection between the needy lead character and his dysfunctional mother is fraught with tension.

Read the rest of this review at TheSkanner.com

Sandra L. Richards: The 'Rice & Rocks' Interview

By **Kam Williams**
For The Skanner News

The American-born daughter of Jamaican immigrant parents, Sandra L. Richards is the author of "Rice & Rocks." She hopes that her debut picture book will serve as an educational resource for families seeking to teach their children the value of their heritage and the importance of cultural diversity.

Sandra completed both her undergraduate and graduate studies at Seton Hall University, and is the Executive Director, Head of Diverse and Multi-cultural Marketing, Wealth Management at Morgan Stanley. Learn more about Sandra at www.sandra-richards.com.

Kam Williams: Hi Sandra. Congratulations on "Rice & Rocks."

Sandra L. Richards: Thank you so much, I really appreciate it.

KW: What inspired you to write the book?

SLR: The inspiration for "Rice &



cutline

Rocks" came from my family in two parts. One, my parents are from Jamaica and immigrated to the USA with the hopes to give their children a chance of growing up with greater opportunities. However, it was important to them that we were raised with a sense of pride of our culture and traditions, and food was certainly at the center

See RICHARDS on page 11



SHOWTIMES The Week of
Friday, Oct. 21 through
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<p>THE BEATLES: EIGHT DAYS A WEEK - THE TOURING YEARS (NR) Fri-Thur: 11:30, 6:55</p>	<p>JASON BOURNE (PG-13) Fri: 2:30, 7:20, 9:15</p>
<p>FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS (PG-13) Fri-Thur: 11:45, 4:15</p>	<p>DON'T THINK TWICE (R) Fri-Thur: 2:10, 9:45</p>
<p>PETE'S DRAGON (PG) Fri-Thur: 12:15, 5:05</p>	<p>STAR TREK BEYOND (PG-13) Fri-Thur: 2:20, 6:40</p>
<p>THE HOWLING (R) Fri-Thur: 4:50, 9:55</p>	
<p><i>\$4.00 adults, \$3.00 senior citizens (65+) \$3.00 for kids (12 & under)</i></p>	

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Babysitting: Available for children 2 to 8 years old. Fri: shows after 3:30pm and before 8:00pm. Sat - Sun: all shows before 8:00pm. \$9.50 per child for the length of the movie. Call to reserve a spot, no drop ins.



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