

FILM REVIEW

AP Photo/Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc.
Will Ferrell appears in a scene from “Get Hard.”

‘Get Hard’ plays with stereotypes with mixed success

By SANDY COHEN
AP Entertainment Writer

While the stereotypes in “Get Hard” may be gross exaggerations, its characters live in the real world: A place where the chasm between rich and poor is vast and growing; where black men are disproportionately jailed and white-collar criminals often evade punishment.

In this comedy from first-time director Etan Cohen, James (Will Ferrell) is a Los Angeles millionaire hedge-fund investor whose life of indulgence and ignorance is interrupted by a surprise prison sentence for fraud. He turns to the guy who runs the company car wash, Darnell (Kevin Hart) — apparently the only black person he has ever met — and asks for help to prepare for 10 years in maximum security.

“Get Hard”

★★★ ☆

R, 99 minutes

Darnell has no jail experience, but he agrees because he needs money to buy a home in a better school district for his little girl.

When Darnell’s wife, Rita (Edwina Findley Dickerson) — the film’s only voice of reason — asks what he did to give the impression he had a criminal record, he replies, “I was being black.”

Darnell’s pre-jail prep class includes transforming his student’s Bel-Air mansion into a pretend prison, the household staff gleefully becoming its guards. Lessons include getting James in shape, teaching him how to fight and encouraging him to practice oral sex on men.

The first yields some laughs as the 6-foot-3 Ferrell uses the diminutive Hart as a barbell. But forced sex isn’t funny, no matter who’s doing the forcing or the gender of the parties involved. “Get Hard” traffics in other crude humor involving more than one look at Farrell’s naked tush and a tiring amount of puns on the film’s title.

Darnell knows one real ex-con, his cousin Russell (an ultra-charismatic Tip “T.I.” Harris), whom he turns to for actual help for James behind bars. James hits it off with Russell and his gangster pals when he shows them how they can “liquidate two bricks of cocaine” into hedge funds to make more money.

“Wall Street, man. Those are the real criminals,” one gangster says.

Right. This is supposed to be a parody of the One Percent.

The film is guilty of occasionally underlining its jokes like this. James even uses the phrase “teachable moment” after a heated racial encounter — and not ironically.

Stars and producers of “Get Hard” defended the film after its premiere at South by Southwest last week, where some viewers and critics called it racist and homophobic.

So when does satire become an expression of the very sentiment it hopes to ridicule?

James’ initial bias against blacks is overt. He’s afraid of Darnell when they first meet, and openly assumes he has been to jail because of his race, citing the statistical likelihood. That can work as satire.

But when Darnell misses all of James’ literary references, is that satire, or is it racist and classist?

James has two female love interests, one white and one black. The black woman does more twerking than speaking on screen. Does that satirize a racist and sexist stereotype, or reinforce it?

It’s tricky territory to tread, and “Get Hard” doesn’t always get it right, but in a nation where racial and economic divides are growing issues, it deserves credit for trying.

The film stays afloat on the goofy charm of its two leads, a great soundtrack with music from Nicki Minaj, T.I. and The Pharcyde, and an undercurrent of truth.

Visual artist Blasser introduces herself to Pendleton

It’s tough being the new kid in town. Nobody knows you and meeting new people can be an anxiety-inducing task. What better way to let your new neighbors know who you are than to hold an open house for the whole city to attend?

From now until the end of May the Pendleton Public Library is doing just that for Pendleton’s newest resident artist, Nika Blasser, by exhibiting a collection of her work. It wouldn’t be proper to describe the show as a retrospective — Blasser herself described it as a “hodgepodge” — but it makes for a well-rounded introduction by compiling her work from three different periods: work produced as an undergraduate living in Portland, work made while earning her Master of Fine Arts in Edmonton, Alberta, and work freshly produced here in Eastern Oregon.

The library is a passive space for a display. A showcase of visual art isn’t the intent of the building as it is at the Pendleton Center for the Arts or an art gallery downtown, and works hung on the wall are almost an afterthought as folks notice them only as they make their way through the stacks to track down a Patricia Cornwell novel.

That lack of context suits Nika’s content quite well. Much of her work focuses on approaching familiar subjects from a vantage point that renders it nearly unrecognizable. Texture holds prominence in her pieces.



Contributed by Nika Blasser

“Edge of Canada” is a piece featured at the Pendleton Public Library culled from Nika Blasser’s collection of photos of winter in Canada.

“My eye is always looking for things that are fairly stripped down,” says Blasser, “stuff that is fairly minimal and you have a hard time figuring out what you’re looking at. I always like to see when people discover what they’re looking at.”

That would be an apt description of the collection of photos Blasser took while studying at the University of Alberta. Inspired by the native Oregonian’s first time living in an extremely cold environment, the photos are extreme close-ups of snow flakes, winter clouds set against nothing else but a stark blue sky, and icebergs abutting rugged coastlines.

The oldest set of work on display dates back to 2010 while Nika was attending Portland State University. The mixed media pieces are a mixture of resin and iron filings. While the resin mixture was still pliable Blasser used rare earth magnets to create designs with the filings. The result is a three dimensional abstract texture with the filings looking as though they are suspended in space.

Blasser moved to the Pendleton

area after her husband Karl Davis was hired as the new executive director of Crow’s Shadow Institute for the Arts. She immediately rolled up her sleeves and started taking part in the local art community by judging the BMCC student art show currently up at the Betty Feves Gallery, helping out at Crow’s Shadow, and teaching and taking workshops at the Pendleton Center for the Arts.

Her newest pieces of art are born out of one of those workshops she attended: explorations of encaustic painting. The technique — which dates back as far as 100 B.C. — involves melted beeswax mixed with pigment that is applied to a surface. In this case the surface was a set of panels Nika had prepared for oil painting.

Even though she now lives in Pendleton, Blasser still maintains strong ties to Edmonton. In May she will be teaching an in-division course at the University of Alberta and later this year participating in the Alberta Biennial at the Art Gallery of Alberta. She also is participating in a group show at a contemporary gallery in Alberta. Her contribution (in collaboration with fellow alumni Alysha Creighton) to the group show “Monstrous?” is a series of Super 8 footage of one of the artists traipsing about Edmonton in a monster suit made of tinsel.

Check out Blasser’s work at the library. Check out a book while you’re at it.

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James Dean Kindle is a singer-songwriter and musician and part-time Pendleton resident. You can contact him at jamesdeankindle@gmail.com.

WHAT TO DO

Festivals

- Othello Sandhill Crane Festival**
- March 27-29
 - Othello, Washington
 - www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org/
 - \$10/adults, \$7/seniors, kids 12 and under free with paying adult. Tours range from \$6-\$60
 - Features tours, lectures and activities. The popular tours fill up, reservations recommended.
- Battle of the Bars**
- Friday, April 3, 6 p.m. No cover
 - Let ‘er Buck Room, Pendleton Round-up Grounds
 - 21-and-over. Serves as fundraiser for Pendleton Round-Up Happy Canyon Hall of Fame. Vote for Pendleton Whisky drinks to crown best bartender.
- Pendleton Home & Outdoor Show**
- Friday, April 10, noon-6 p.m.
 - Saturday, April 11, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 - Sunday, April 12, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
 - Pendleton Convention Center, 1601 Westgate
 - www.facebook.com/pdthomeandoutdoorshow
 - Free admission. Includes door prizes and give-aways.
- State of Change- BMCC Arts & Culture Festival**
- April 13-15, Pendleton campus
 - April 15-16, Hermiston campus
 - www.bluecc.edu
 - Most activities free of charge.

Art

- Whispers Quilt Exhibit**
- Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Last day
 - Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St.
 - www.pendletonarts.org
 - Free. Exhibit features collection of works by Central Oregon Studio Art Quilt Associates members. Also, a sewing bee table is set up to engage visitors

- in trying simple stitching techniques. Runs through March 28.
- Ramp It Up: Skateboard Culture in Native America**
- Monday - Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
 - Tamástsiikt Cultural Institute, near Wildhorse Resort & Casino.
 - www.tamastsiikt.org
 - Regular admission is \$10/adults, \$9/senior citizens, \$6/youths, free/5 and under or \$25/family of four. Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service celebrate the vibrancy, creativity and history of the American Indian skateboarding culture.
- Open Regional call for entries**
- Tuesday-Fridays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; Saturdays, noon-4 p.m.
 - Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St.
 - www.pendletonarts.org
 - Entry fee \$10/adults, \$5/teens. Artists may enter up to two works of art in any medium except photography. Cash prizes, show runs April 9-May 29 Deadline to enter is April 4.
- Heritage Station Museum**
- Tuesday-Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
 - 108 S.W. Frazer Ave., Pendleton
 - www.heritigestationmuseum.org
 - \$5/adults, \$2/student, \$4/seniors, \$10/family.

Music

- Eldon Potts**
- Saturday, March 28, 7 p.m.
 - Columbia View Community Church, 1230 E. Highway 730, Irrigon
 - Free, love offering taken. Gospel music concert with Joplin, Missouri, preacher and recording artist.
- Joe Slick Band**
- Saturday, March 28, 9 p.m.-1 a.m. No cover
 - Wildhorse Sports Bar at Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off Highway 331, Mission.
 - Aarun Carter & Jonathan Trawick

- Saturday, March 28; 7 p.m.
 - Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St.
 - www.pendletonarts.org
 - \$10. Duo featuring champion fiddler and guitarist performing roots/Americana fiddle tunes.
- Whisky Barrel Rocker**
- Saturday, March 28; 9 p.m. to midnight. 21-and-over. No cover
 - Hamley Saloon, 8 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton
- Decade X**
- Friday, April 3; Saturday, April 4, 9 p.m.-1 a.m. No cover
 - Wildhorse Sports Bar at Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off Highway 331, Mission.
- Funk Factory**
- Friday, April 10; Saturday, April 11, 9 p.m.-1 a.m. No cover
 - Wildhorse Sports Bar at Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off Highway 331, Mission.
- Celebrate Oregon Tour**
- Saturday, April 11; 7 p.m.
 - Vert Auditorium, 480 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton
 - www.pdxgmc.org
 - \$15 adults, \$10 seniors 60+, \$5 students. The Portland Gay Men’s Chorus brings its signature performance to Pendleton as part of its tour of Oregon. Tickets available at Armchair Books or at the door, no one will be turned away due to lack of funds. All proceeds benefit PFLAG Pendleton.
- Peter Krebs Trio & The Delines**
- Friday, April. 17, 7 p.m. All ages. No cover.
 - Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co., 403 S. Main St., Pendleton

Night life

- Thursday Night Comedy**
- Thursdays, 8 p.m.
 - Wildhorse Sports Bar, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off Highway 331, Mission.
- Digital Karaoke**
- Thursdays and Saturdays, 8 p.m.
 - The Pheasant, 149 E. Main St., Hermiston

- Mac’s Trivia Night**
- Thursdays, 8 p.m. No cover
 - Mac’s Bar & Grill, 1400 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton
 - 21 and older. Teams of 2-8 compete in trivia contest with other teams. Live host and prizes.
- Wine tasting**
- Fridays, 4-8 p.m.
 - Sno Road Winery, 111 W. Main St., Echo.
- Open Mic**
- First/third Friday each month, 8 p.m. to midnight
 - The Packard Tavern, 118 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton
 - www.facebook.com/groups/pendletonopenmic
- Karaoke**
- Fridays 8 p.m. (9 p.m. if game on)
 - Riverside Sports Bar, 1501 Sixth St., Umatilla
- DJ and dancing**
- Fridays, 8 p.m.
 - The Pheasant, 149 E. Main St., Hermiston

Theater, stage, film

- “Chitty Chitty Bang Bang”**
- March 28, April 3-4; 7:30 p.m.
 - March 28, April 4; 2:30 p.m.
 - Elgin Opera House, 104 N. Eighth St.
 - www.elginoperahouse.com
 - Reserved \$17/\$8. Take a musical adventure with an out-of-this-world car that flies through the air and sails the seas.
- “The Princess and the Pea”**
- Saturday March 28; 4 p.m. & 6 p.m.
 - AC Houghton Elementary School, 1105 N. Main St., Irrigon
 - Missoula Children’s Theatre production features students from kindergarten through 12th grade.
- “A Gay SDA Play”**
- Wednesday, April 1; 7 p.m.
 - Power House Theatre, 111 N. Sixth St., Walla Walla
 - www.phtwww.com
 - \$12, free for students and teachers. Local playwright Brad-

- ley Nelson explores the real-life struggles between the Seventh-day Adventist religion and individuals who come out within its membership. This play contains frank discussions about sexuality.
- “Higher Ground”**
- Saturday, April 4; 2 p.m.
 - SAGE Center, 101 Olson Road, Boardman
 - www.visitsage.com
 - Free. The 2007 documentary film about moving the township of Boardman due to the construction of the John Day Dam in the 1960s.
- “Homer Writes a Play!”**
- Thursday, April 15; 6:30 p.m.
 - Power House Theatre, 111 N. Sixth St., Walla Walla
 - www.phtwww.com
 - \$9 adults, \$6 youth. The Adventist Health Little Watts Children’s Series of Family Entertainment presents fun, funny and hands-on Greek designed for kids ages 5-13. Homer’s 4X-great-grandson learns about Greek myth, history and culture as he tries to write a play for the Festival of Zeus.

Hot tickets

- Garth Brooks. April 12-13, Moda Center, Portland. Reserved seats (\$74.89) via www.ticketmaster.com.
 - Umatilla County Fair concerts: Dustin Lynch (Aug. 11), John Michael Montgomery (Aug. 12), Latino Night (Aug. 13), Hinder (Aug. 14) and Warrant (Aug. 15). Reserved seats (\$12) via 541-567-6121 or 515 W. Orchard Ave., Hermiston www.umatillacounty.net/fair
 - Sasquatch Music Festival. Memorial Day weekend, Gorge Amphitheater, George, Wash. Reserved seats (\$325 and up for 4-day pass) via www.livenation.com.
- Want to get your event listed in our calendar? Send information to tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com, or c/o Tammy Malgesini, 333 E. Main Street, Hermiston, OR, 97838.

PENDLETON

Local bartenders get ready to mix it up

East Oregonian

Area bartenders will stir things up as they participate in the Battle of the Bars.

In its fifth year, the competition serves as a fundraiser for the Pendleton Round-up and Happy Canyon Hall of Fame. The event is Friday, April 3 from 6-8 p.m. in the Let ‘er Buck Room, located on the Pendleton Round-Up Grounds. Those attending must be 21 or older.

There’s no cover charge for the event. However, people can cast their votes for their favorite drinks by making a purchase.

Returning competitors include last year’s champion, Wildhorse Sports Bar from Wildhorse Resort & Casino, along with Vigil’s at Cimmiyotti’s, Hamley & Co., Crabby’s Underground Saloon, Mac’s Bar & Grill and the Let ‘er Buck Room. New to the battle is Sundown Grill and BBQ.

Each establishment will create a signature drink that must contain Pendleton Whisky. This year, a tasting portion also will be offered for those that would like to try ev-



EO file photo

Hamley bartender Kristen Shea pours Pendleton Whisky while making a drink called the “Deac” during the 2014 Battle of the Bars in Pendleton. Serving as a fundraiser for the Pendleton Round-Up and Happy Canyon Hall of Fame, this year’s event is Friday, April 3 in the Let ‘er Buck Room.

ery drink before voting. At the end of the event, votes will be tallied and the winning bar will receive a plaque along with bragging rights for the year.

Following the Battle of the

Bars, there will be a live auction and dancing with music from Dan Burns Productions. The bar will stay open for refreshments until 11 p.m. Dinner will be available for purchase from The Bank & Grill

Catering company.

Auction items include a Big Four Rodeo Dream Ticket Package with tickets for the Walla Walla Fair & Frontier Days, the Benton Franklin Fair and Rodeo, the Lewiston Round-Up and of course, the Pendleton Round-Up, which is offering tickets to the rodeo, Happy Canyon, the PBR and the concert. Other items are prime parking spots during Round-Up week, Pendleton Whisky coolers and camp chairs, a vintage Coors beer cooler, western decor and more.

Hall of fame president Tiah DeGrofftt is amazed at the level of support the event garners each year. As the largest yearly fundraiser for the Hall of Fame, money raised helps keep the museum open and the lights on, she said.

“The local establishments really give a lot to help us support the Hall of Fame, from the time and effort to the staff and even some of the ingredients,” DeGrofftt said. “We wouldn’t have a fundraiser without them.”

For more information, contact DeGrofftt at 541-379-9740 or degrofftt25@yahoo.com.