

Film Review: ‘Sparkle’ is Dull for Whitney Houston Swan Song

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on August 17, 2012 - 7:33am

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CHICAGO – Given the shocking circumstances of Whitney Houston’s passing, it is a bit disconcerting to see her vibrantly alive again in the new film “Sparkle.” However, if she was still with us, this trifling and dull film would soon be forgotten. Jordan Sparks, Derek Luke and Carmen Ejogo co-star.



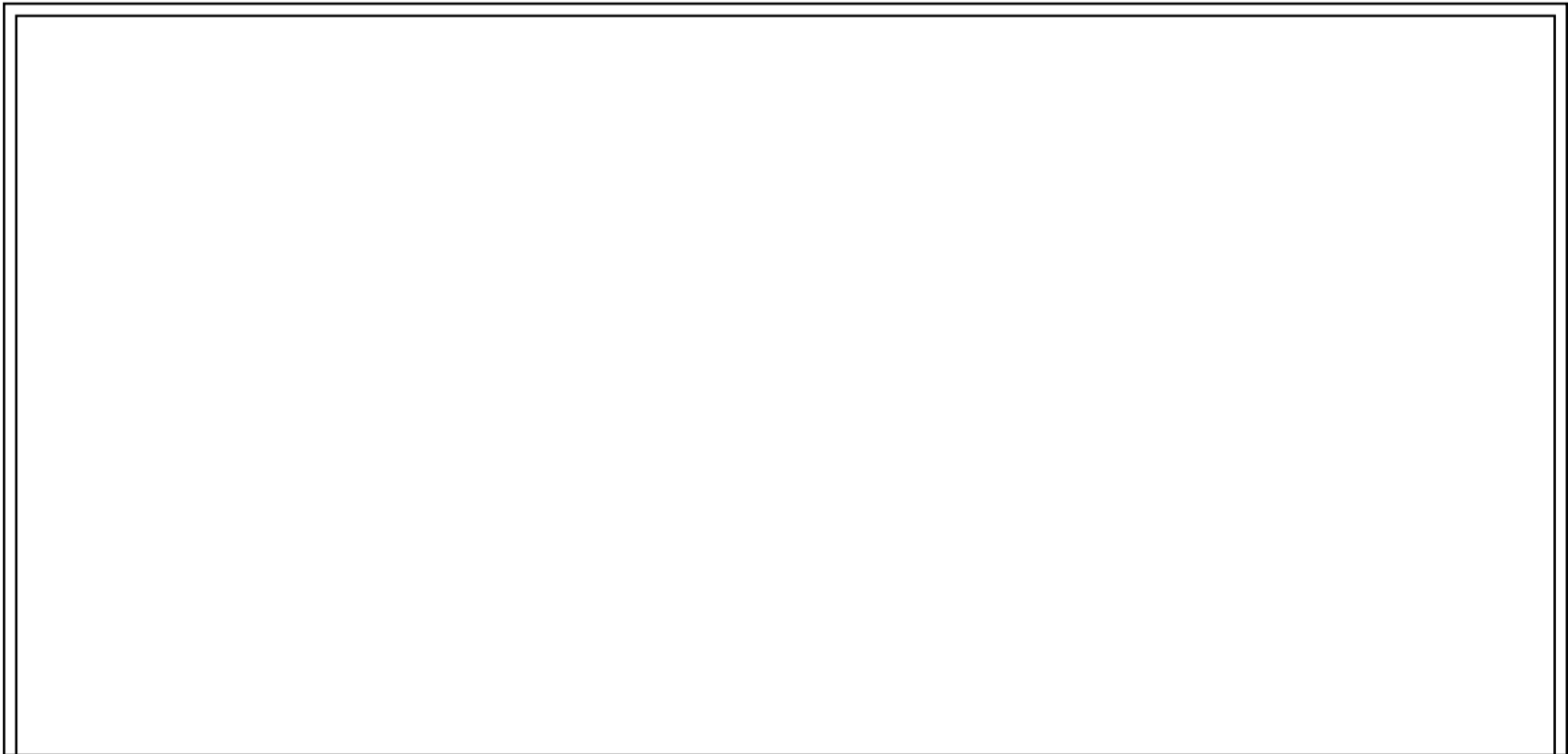
It is unfortunate that this will be Houston’s last public work, because “Sparkle” never really shines. The characters go through the standard mode kids-let’s-put-on-a-show, with standard obstacles like religion, household rules and unmotivated push back from negative people – including Houston’s role. There are some dramatic musical numbers, but they are expressed mostly as set pieces rather than memorable tunes. There is a lot of sincerity in the performances and overall production, yet sincerity cannot overcome the drawback of a dishwater story.

It’s 1968 Detroit, and three sisters are in or on the verge of adulthood, and are living in the home of their mother Emma (Whitney Houston). The oldest, nicknamed Sister (Carmen Ejogo), is the prodigal daughter, having come home after a failed attempt as a singer. Dolores (Tiki Sumpter) is soon off to medical school. The youngest is named Sparkle (Jordin Sparks), and her dreams are of music, as she constantly writes songs in her journal.

There is a family friend named Stix (Derek Luke), who sees the potential in both forming the sisters as a girl group and Sparkle’s songs. The girls rise through the Detroit music scene, drawing interest from both Motown records and major labels. This goes on without the knowledge of Emma, whose religious insistence and household rules run counter to the ambitions of the group. When an oily comedian named Satin (Mike Epps) starts courting Sister, their coupling begins a cycle of downfall for the fledgling singing act.

“Sparkle,” opens everywhere on August 17th. Featuring Jordin Sparks, Whitney Houston, Derek Luke, Mike Epps, Carmen Ejogo, Tika Sumpter, Omari Hardwick and Cee Lo Green. Screenplay by Mara Brock Akil. Directed by Salim Akil. Rated “PG-13”

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Sparkle (Jordin Sparks) and her Mother Emma (Whitney Houston) in ‘Sparkle’
Photo credit: Alicia Gbur for TriStar Pictures

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