

'Stockton on My Mind' shows mayor's hopes for ailing city

By Russell Contreras

Walk into the Stockton, California, city offices and you might hear Drake's "Plan" coming from the mayor's office. There, Mayor Michael Tubbs could be bobbing his head to the lyrics, "I can't do this one my own, ayy, no, ayy." Outside those walls sits one of the poorest, least literate communities in the nation.

And yet there's nowhere else this 30-year-old Stanford University graduate would rather find himself, even amid the hate and ridicule critics throw at him.

"Stockton on My Mind," a new HBO documentary available to stream for free beginning Friday, dives into the dreams of this unlikely mayor who defied odds in 2016 to lead his impoverished city. The son of a single mother and a father serving time in prison, Tubbs defeated Republican incumbent Anthony Silva to become the community's youngest and first Black mayor. That same night Donald Trump shocked the nation and won the presidency.

Tubbs immediately shot to national stardom among depressed liberals who sought new, bold ideas to fight poverty, violence and educational inequality. And it was those bold ideas that garnered praise and scorn. Soon after taking office, the film illustrates how Tubbs attracted private funds to experiment with a basic income plan that critics dismissively called "free money" for the poor. He organized

former prison inmates to keep peace among gangs and got more private donations to provide scholarships to the city's poor high school students. It's all about empowering others to "upset the setup," he explained. "It's interesting. It feels like we've been moving forward while the country is moving backward," Tubbs told The Associated Press on a recent weekday after taking a COVID-19 test. (It was negative.) "We're definitely not perfect. We have a lot of work to do."

In the film, Tubbs must also focus on his marriage to Albuquerque, New Mexico-born scholar Anna Malaika Nti-Asare-Tubb and their new baby. And he has unresolved matters with his father, Michael Tubbs Sr., a former gang member, some called a "monster," who is trying to connect with his son.

Comeback

Initially, the mayor turned down director Marc Levin's offer to follow him around to document his life during his time in the city council. But then Tubbs agreed after Levin vowed he wanted to make a film not just about a young mayor but about a city seeking a comeback.

Besides Tubbs, "Stockton on My Mind" looks into the life of Raymond Aguilar, a man who served more than two decades in prison and now works with at-risk communities to deter violent crime. It also shows the work of Jasmine Dellafosse, a community organizer

and activist who helps youth avoid the court system.

The documentary is the latest in new line of films that look into the works of insurgent candidates of color in the age of Trump. The 2019 Netflix film "Knock Down the House" by Rachel Lears, for example, examines the campaigns of US Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and other progressive candidates who challenge incumbents.

"Stockton on My Mind" will stream free on HBO until Sept 21.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: The brazen humor of "The Ren & Stimpy Show" will be revisited in a new Comedy Central version of the animated series.

The original program that was a hit for Nickelodeon will be reimagined in partnership with Nickelodeon Animation Studio, Comedy Central said Wednesday.

Ren, a psychologically challenged Chihuahua, and Stimpy, less intelligent than your average cat, were created by **John Kricfalusi** and debuted on Nickelodeon in 1991. "The Ren & Stimpy Show" drew criticism from observers who deemed it unsuitable for children, citing its crass jokes and sexual innuendo. It aired for five seasons.

On Comedy Central, the show will join other adult-animation series including "South Park" and a revamped version of "Beavis and Butt-Head," the channel said.

A debut date was not announced. (AP)

Television

Variety



This image released by Samuel Goldwyn Films shows Mark Rylance (right), followed by Gana Bayarsaikhan in a scene from 'Waiting for the Barbarians.' (AP)

Film

A visually striking but frustratingly slow-moving film

A superb Rylance lifts up 'Barbarians'

By Joycelyn Noveck

Watching Mark Rylance play a man of basic decency getting swallowed up by an evil world — and a sadistic Johnny Depp — in "Waiting for the Barbarians," I absent-mindedly jotted down in my notes: "Nobody does basic decency like Mark Rylance."

Then I remembered: Nobody quite does INdecency like Rylance, either. Watch him play a villain, a creep, or maybe a scheming Shakespearean king, and you'll be chilled to the bone.

Comedy or tragedy, prose or verse, stage or screen: This is simply an actor who couldn't strike a false note if he tried. And if he seems perfectly cast as the purposely nondescript Magistrate in "Barbarians," a visually striking but frustratingly slow-moving film based on the award-winning novel by J.M. Coetzee, it's perhaps because, well, he's well cast in pretty much everything he does.

And it's no easy task, playing a nameless man, neither hero nor villain, serving a nameless Empire in a nameless time in the border region of a nameless land.

It's tricky precisely because, as you may have guessed, there's so much that's necessarily left unspecified in this adaptation from Colombian director Ciro Guerra, with a screenplay by the Nobel-winning South African author himself.

Coetzee's allegorical novel reflects on themes of power, war, torture, the evils of colonialism and the need humans have to demonize others in order to subjugate them.

It's also about "otherizing" the foreigner, in order to more efficiently hate. Many have pointed out parallels to our modern world. Guerra himself says the story, which at first seemed from another time, "somehow morphed into a story about our present age."

A novel like Coetzee's invites readers to fill in the blank spaces. On a screen, we tend to crave more specificity. The result, coupled with a too-languor-

ous pace, is a film that's intermittently engrossing and always interesting, but less potent than it could have been.

"Barbarians," is told in four chapters: Summer, Winter, Spring and Autumn. We begin in summer, with an arresting tableau of a desert landscape, snow-capped mountains far in the distance. (The movie was filmed in Morocco and Italy.)

The Magistrate, a loyal employee of the colonizing Empire who governs with an easy hand, is heading toward retirement when suddenly Colonel Joll (Depp) turns up. The Colonel has heard there's trouble brewing among the nomads who dwell along the border.

Menacing

At first, Depp sounds, in tone and inflection, like he's efforting his best David Bowie impersonation. His vibe is menacing and a little hip, too, with white gloves and those dark round glasses telegraphing Hollywood. "They protect one's eyes against the glare of the sun," he explains to the bewildered Magistrate, and somehow it sounds very nefarious.

The Magistrate tells him there's never been trouble in these parts — "once in every generation there is an explosion of hysteria about the barbarians," he says, but it never amounts to anything.

The Colonel, though, has a fool-proof interrogation method. "Pain is truth," he explains. "All else is subject to doubt." The results of his method — "first lies, then pressure, more lies, more pressure" — will become immediately clear when a sick boy and his elderly uncle, who came to town seeking medicine, are accused of stealing sheep. After their interrogation, one is dead, and the other has confessed to a barbarian plot.

And so it goes, with the Magistrate trying desperately to hold on, both to his job and his vaguely moral grounding. In Winter, "the girl" is introduced — a nomad girl who's been maimed by interroga-

tors, and for whom the Magistrate develops strong feelings. (She's affectingly played by Mongolian actress Gana Bayarsaikhan, in her first major film role.)

Late in the film, Robert Pattinson arrives as Mandel, another nasty officer; the charismatic actor injects some needed energy into the proceedings. He has some good scenes, but the best words throughout the movie fittingly go to Rylance, including these, which somehow stick in the mind:

"We have no enemy that I know of. Unless we ourselves are the enemy."

"Waiting for the Barbarians," a Samuel Goldwyn Films release, is unrated by the Motion Picture Association of America. Running time: 112 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: If you want to keep the warm feelings going, the good-natured "Peanut Butter Falcon" hit Amazon Video on Thursday. This lovely 2019 indie (and sleeper box office hit) features **Shia LaBeouf** and newcomer **Zack Gottsagen** on a Huck Finn-type journey across **North Carolina**. It's a soulful performance from LaBeouf, but it's Gottsagen, who has Down syndrome, who wins over your heart as a young wrestling-obsessed man who is determined to be free.

LOS ANGELES: Seth Rogen plays dual roles in "American Pickle" about a man from the 1920s who falls into a vat of pickle juice, wakes up fully preserved 100 years later and gets a chance to know his great-grandson — a Brooklyn-based app developer. Part "Being There" meets "Kate & Leopold," part Rogen-joint, "American Pickle," has a sweet-heart and a few fun gags that'll make this a pleasant watch. "American Pickle" hit HBO Max on Thursday. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Lorenzo Soria, president of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association and former editor of the Italian news weekly L'Espresso, died Friday, the association said. He was 68.

Soria died peacefully at his Los Angeles home, the association said in a statement, lauding his "generosity, passion" and sense of humor.

"He was deeply committed to the movie industry's power to heal the world and shine a spotlight on injustice," said the group that awards the annual Golden Globes for excellence in TV and movies.

The Argentinian-born Soria grew up and worked in Italy for L'Espresso before becoming a Los Angeles resident in 1982. Continuing to write for the weekly and for the daily La Stampa, he covered a wide variety of topics including politics and technology.

But his real love was interviewing "Hollywood talent and reporting about trends and changes in the film and television industry," the organization said.

A member of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association since 1989, he was in the administration for more than 25 years. After serving twice before as president, his current tenure began in 2019.

A memorial is planned but details weren't immediately available, said the group, which cited an unidentified Soria family member in its announcement of his death. (AP)

NEW ORLEANS: Comedian **Andy Dick** has filed a lawsuit in New Orleans against the man who punched him last year outside a French Quarter nightclub.

Documents in the July 30 lawsuit were made public Thursday, The Times-Picayune/The New Orleans Advocate reported.

Dick, 54, said the punch by **David Hale**, 47, caused "serious, permanent and disabling injuries." He seeks compensation for medical expenses and lost wages, among other damages.

"The entire suit is ridiculous," Hale's attorney, **Michael Kennedy**, said in an emailed statement Friday to The Associated Press.

Kennedy, who has denied wrongdoing by Hale, said it was "appalling" that Dick would seek lost wages during a pandemic. Hale has maintained that Dick

provoked him into hitting him by grabbing Hale's genitals and winking at him outside the club where Dick had performed. Dick has denied he touched Hale.

On July 28, the New Orleans district attorney's office said it was dropping prosecution of Hale because Dick had not been cooperative and had not kept in touch with prosecutors.



Dick



Flack

A district attorney spokesman, **Ken Daley**, said the case could be revived if Dick reestablishes contact with the district attorney's office. Dick later said he would be willing to come to New Orleans to testify against Hale. (AP)

LONDON: A British coroner ruled Thursday that reality TV host

Caroline Flack killed herself while facing an assault trial she feared would end her career and bring unbearable media scrutiny.

Flack, the former host of "Love Island," was found dead at her London apartment in February, weeks before she was due to stand trial for allegedly assaulting her boyfriend.

North London Coroner **Mary Hassell** said in an inquest verdict

that the 40-year-old Flack took her own life "because of an exacerbation of fluctuating ill health and distress."

"She knew she would face the media, press, publicity — it would all come down upon her," the coroner said.

Inquests are held in **Britain** to determine the facts of sudden, violent or unexplained deaths. (AP)