

Chris Rock's lighthearted look at sisters' 'dos arrives on DVD

Written by Kam Williams

If you were raised in an African-American community, then you're probably very familiar with the notion of "good hair," a term that's generally applied to folks born with wavy locks which are less trouble to take care of than the more tightly-curved or nappy variety. Back in the Sixties, at the dawn of the black pride movement, the afro was embraced as an alternative to adhering to the white standard of beauty associated with straight hair. But the peasy natural proved to be a short-lived fad which unfortunately has pretty much gone the way of the dashiki and the dinosaur.

Consequently, black hair care has blossomed over the years into a multibillion-dollar industry promising sisters silky tresses via a variety of avenues ranging from hot combs and relaxers to wigs and weaves. Regardless of the combination picked, straight hair comes at a considerable cost, given the toll this high-maintenance habit tends to exact not merely financially, but also in terms of one's time and mental and physical health.

It was this litany of concerns which caused Chris Rock to react when his 5 year-old daughter, Lola, asked, "Daddy, why don't I have good hair?" Dismayed to think that she might already be struggling with a sensitive self-esteem issue at such a tender age, he decided to do some serious research in order to figure out exactly how to answer her sensibly.

So, accompanied by a camera crew, he embarked on an exhaustive inquiry into the black hair care business from every angle, conducting probing, if periodically comical interviews at beauty salons, barber shops, conventions, factories and scientific labs all across the U.S. and overseas. The product of that peripatetic prying is Good Hair, an alternately jaw-dropping, informative and thought-provoking documentary featuring Rock in a Michael Moore-like role as a witty, but never really mean-spirited master of ceremonies.

The most alarming aspect of this entire expose' revolves around the widespread use of a substance known as sodium hydroxide, aka lye, aka "creamy crack." Because sodium hydroxide can cause burning, scarring or blindness if it comes in contact with human tissue in solutions greater than 2%, it is no surprise that so many users suffer from scarring, scabs and bald spots on their scalps. Thus, the sobering message Rock ultimately delivers to his impressionable daughters is no surprise, namely, "that the stuff on top of their heads is nowhere near as important as the stuff inside their heads."

A "hair"-larious flick you have to laugh at to keep from crying.

Excellent (4 stars)

Rated PG-13 for profanity, sexuality, drug references and partial nudity.

Running time: 95 minutes

Studio: HBO Films

Distributor: Lionsgate Home Entertainment

DVD Extras: Audio commentary by Chris Rock and producer Nelson George, and a theatrical trailer.

To purchase a copy of good Hair on DVD, visit: <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B002TOJOY8?ie=UTF8&tag=thslfofire-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=39>

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To see a trailer for Good Hair, visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A68UVn0nMvo>