

# Precious—Even if You Don't “Get” Tyler Perry...

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A Review by  
Tom Sims, Executive Director  
Cape May Film Society  
609-884-6700  
[capemayfilm@hotmail.com](mailto:capemayfilm@hotmail.com)  
[www.capemayfilm.org](http://www.capemayfilm.org)

Brought to you by the New Jersey Film Review ([www.njfilmreview.com](http://www.njfilmreview.com))

I don't understand Tyler Perry. I don't get his “Madea” character or why he chooses to play more than one character in his films. What is going on? It's gotten so bad that even if I see his name affiliated with a movie, I approach it with suspicion. This is exactly what I did with his latest film, “Precious,” which he produced with Oprah Winfrey.

“Precious” tells the story of an overweight teen from Harlem who is pregnant with her second child and is invited to enroll in an alternative school in hopes that her life can head in a new direction. She is illiterate, desperately poor, and living with a mother so abusive she makes “Mommie Dearest” look like Mother Teresa. This film delivers visually, on story, and with acting.

The cinematography captures the spirit of Harlem and the soul of our protagonist. The story draws you in with harsh reality tempered with beautifully positioned dream sequences. The screenplay by Geoffrey Fletcher (based on the book “Push” by Sapphire, her first novel after two books of poetry) was subtle and hit several powerful marks.

There are several great performances, such as that of the relatively new face of Paula Patton (who thus far has played smaller roles in films such as “Swing Vote” and “Hitch”). Then there are outstanding performances by the likes of true newcomer Gabourey Sidibe (who plays the lead role in this her first film). Also you'll find Mariah Carey giving a fantastic performance.

But none of these performances provide the same depth as Mo'Nique's portrayal of Precious' angry, hateful mother. In every scene, Mo'Nique draws you into the madness of a woman so steeped in her own bitterness, drowning in her own bile, that it's palatable and shakes you in your seat. And when she is telling off social worker Mrs. Weiss (played by Mariah Carey), you cannot help but be deeply moved—yet you can still hate her in the end.

The film has won several awards already (like Sundance and Toronto), and no doubt it will be a strong contender at this year's Golden Globes and Academy Awards. If you're looking for a cheery, light film, go see Alvin and the Chipmunks (which will likely not be reviewed here). If you only like romantic comedies, pass on this one. But if you don't get Tyler Perry movies (and I feel your “payne”), break from the past and see this film.