

# heart condition misses the mark

by Tom Paul

*Heart Condition*  
New Line Cinema  
directed by James Parriott

*Heart Condition*, a James Parriott film, follows the relationship between tough cop Jack Moony (Bob Hoskins) and suave lawyer Napoleon Stone (Denzel Washington). Stone's heart is transplanted into heart-attack victim Moony's body; Stone's spirit accompanies Moony on an investigation of drug kingpin (Jeffrey Meek) who is exploiting call girl

(Chloe Webb).

*Heart Condition* is intended to make a comment about bigotry. Moony hates Stone, not because he defends prostitutes for a living or because he is involved with drugs, but because he is black.

The friction between them is powered by Moony's racism. Moony chases Stone at the beginning of the film and vows to "nail his (Stone's) black ass to the wall." Most of the humour is derived from Stone's spirit's control over Moony's body (most noticeably and comically when

Stone's spirit refuses to allow Moony to eat a cheeseburger and Moony is left to grapple with the burger in front of a group of fast-food patrons).

Moony's bias has clear, economic motivations. He is incensed by Stone's opulent lifestyle. He distrusts Stone for being successful. If *Heart Condition* had made the point that money was the problem, and not colour, Bob Hoskins character would have become a lot more understandable, if not likeable.

Unfortunately, *Heart Condition*

makes humorous what could be provocative. It is a mix of *48 Hours* and *Beverly Hills Cop*. The young recruit at the police station is a dead ringer for Judge Reinhold; Denzel Washington seems to mimic Eddie Murphy in a number of scenes.

The partiality is never resolved; we don't learn anything from Moony's hatred; we are only meant to laugh.

Webb is mis-cast as the call girl. Her character is pivotal; she does not have the charisma to carry the role. We hear other characters talk

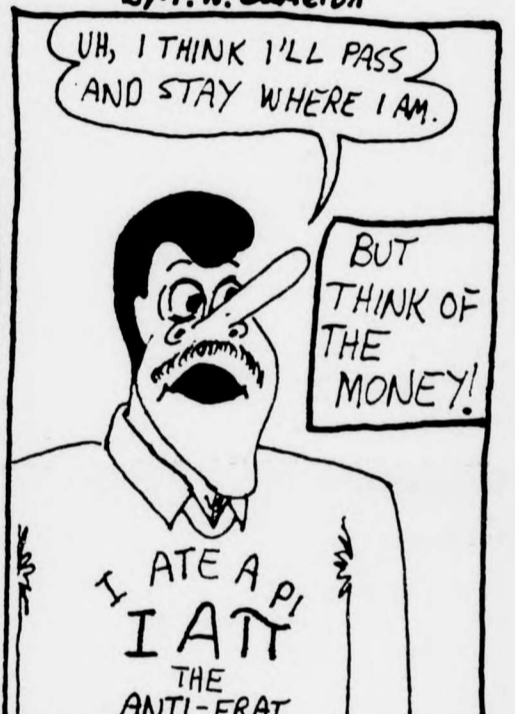
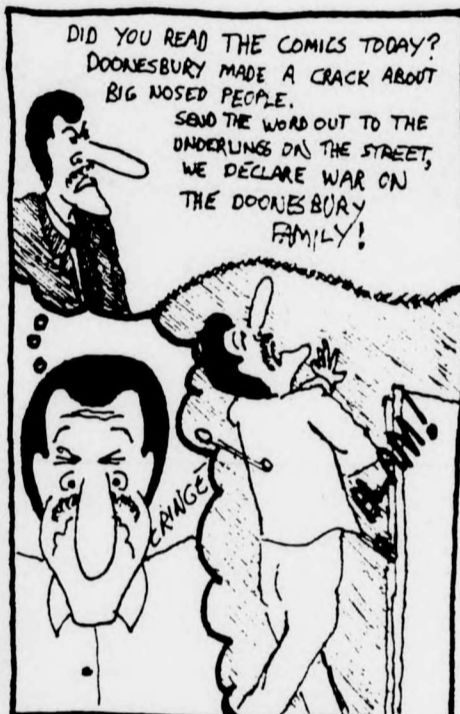
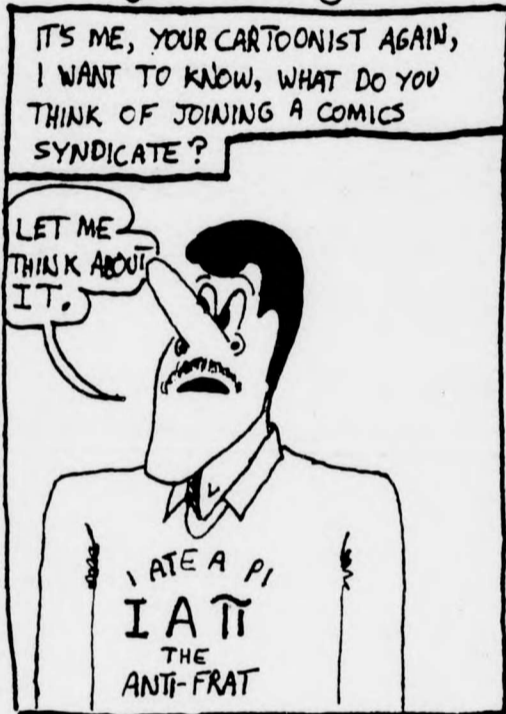
about how nice she is, but her integrity is never expressed (as it should be, early on) through her actions.

*Heart Condition* is evidence Washington is more a dramatic actor than a comedian; he looks uncomfortable throwing out one-liners. Hoskins seems torn between playing the essentially one-dimensional role of straight-man to Stone, and playing the role of bigot-with-a-conscience.

*Heart Condition* could have raised issues; instead, it milks a gag.

# CARTOONS

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