

PAGEANT
THEATRE
JULY 26 - AUG 1

TONI MORRISON
THE PIECES I AM
FRI - SAT: 4pm and 7pm / SUN: 1pm and 4pm
MON - THU: 4pm and 7pm

THE LAST BLACK MAN
IN SAN FRANCISCO
SAT: 1pm / SUN: 7pm

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REEL WORLD



Toni Morrison: *The Pieces I Am*

A whole history

A documentary on a great American artist; and a dark satire of America's culture wars

Toni Morrison: *The Pieces I Am* is a two-hour portrayal of the great American novelist and Nobel Prize winner. In a way it's a documentary-style biopic, but with a strong autobiographical element. Morrison tells her own story here, in her own words, speaking directly to the camera (and to her unseen and unheard interviewer, Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, who is also the film's director).

by
Juan-Carlos Selznick



Toni Morrison: *The Pieces I Am*
Opens Friday, July 26.
Pageant Theatre.
Rated PG-13.



Sword of Trust
Available via multiple on-demand and streaming outlets.
Rated R.

As such, *The Pieces I Am* gives us a dramatically detailed sketch of her life story—novelist, editor, teacher, mother, African-American icon. But its most extraordinary and rewarding qualities reside in its extended up-close encounters with the woman herself—the exceptionally large-spirited human being this film lets us see and hear.

Greenfield-Sanders has assembled an impressive array of eloquent talking heads (Angela Davis, Fran Lebowitz, Oprah Winfrey; novelists Walter Mosley and Russell Banks; legendary editor Robert Gottlieb; shamanic poet Sonia Sanchez; etc.) to serve as a kind of chorus. And co-producer Johanna Giebelhaus has edited the mix of archival photos, film clips and talking heads in ways that are not just illustrative, working instead like flashes of memory coursing through an autobiographical narrative.

But the Toni Morrison we see and hear onscreen

is the real heart of the matter in this case—a great soul revealed, without pretensions and in remarkably direct terms.

In the offbeat, sardonic and curiously topical comedy, *Sword of Trust*, a Civil War-era sword turns up at a pawnshop in Birmingham, Ala., and sends a pointedly quirky set of characters into some darkly farcical encounters with America's modern-day "culture wars." The results are both amusing and disturbing.

The pawnshop is run by bespectacled Mel (Marc Maron), a mild-mannered guy who seems a bit of a hipster with maybe a touch of the liberal patriarch. The sword is an apparently valuable relic that has just been inherited by Cynthia (Jillian Bell), and she along with her partner, Mary (Michaela Watkins), bring it into Mel's shop for expert assessment and possible sale.

The sword is a Union sword that Cynthia's Southern ancestors claim was surrendered to a Confederate general, thereby making it further evidence that the South actually won the Civil War. That claim sets off a series of encounters and misadventures with Civil War buffs, conspiracy theorists, "truthers," racist cultists and thugs.

All in all, *Sword of Trust* is an alert comedy of manners laced with social commentary and quirky characterizations. Mel's sidelong crisis of conscience ends up being central, and seemingly peripheral characters, like his gullible assistant Nathaniel (Jon Bass) and a wacked-out poet named Deirdre (writer-director Lynn Shelton), make surprisingly strong impressions as well. □



Poor



Fair



Good



Very Good



Excellent