‘Heaven Bound’ Offers Spiritual Insights, Humor

BY LORELEI GOFF
STAFF WRITER

A large crowd turned out for the Capitol Theatre Thursday night for a showing of the movie “Heaven Bound.” Holston United Methodist Home for Children and the Capitol Theatre co-hosted the free event.

A family-friendly comedy, the movie’s unlikely plot serves up Christian teachings with a generous helping of laughter. The movie was produced by Torry Martin and Adam Drake.

In the movie, a middle-aged couple accustomed to the finer things a high-paying advertising executive’s salary provides suddenly find themselves broke. In an act of desperation, the woman hatches a plan to rob her boss’s mansion.

Martin, an author and comedian who co-wrote the movie with Marshal Younger and Rene Gutteridge as well as starred as one of the film’s main characters, spoke to the audience following the show.

After praying with the audience, Martin said, “This is a dream come true for me. I never expected to write a book. I barely graduated high school.”

He added, “I’ve got ADHD, OCD; I’ve got every initial you can think of.”

Martin said as a child he was “the loneliest, most unpopular, overweight kid you ever met in your life. I had no friends.” He described being bullied in high school and being labelled with the nickname “Boom Boom” because of his weight.

Martin talked about being very creative, and doing comedy and acting as an adult.

“I wanted to be an actor because I could be anybody else but myself when I’m an actor,” he said. “I could hide behind any character in the world. I wanted to be anybody but ‘Boom Boom.’”

After developing a drug problem, Martin moved to a remote cabin in Alaska, making a living collecting moose droppings for souveniers and Christmas tree garlands. While living there, he attended a Bible study in an effort to disprove it and free himself from a sense of guilt. Instead, he became a believer and began using his talents to share Bible teachings after winning several prizes in contests for Christian artists.



SUN PHOTO BY LORELEI GOFF

Torry Martin, author, actor and movie producer, was thronged by fans who attended a showing of his movie, “Heaven Bound,” at the Capitol Theatre on Thursday.

Martin said comedy came naturally to him.

“Humor is a coping mechanism,” he said. “I will make a fat joke about myself and have no problem with it. I’m really doing it to beat you to the punch line, because it doesn’t hurt when I do it. It hurts when you do it. Humor is a defense mechanism.”

He said when he was getting bullied all the way through high school, he would think of ways to “look for the funny” in an effort to disarm people with humor. When he became a Christian, he began to look for things God wanted to teach him through uncomfortable situations.

Martin now sees the challenges of ADHD as an asset.

“It is a gift,” he explained. “If I didn’t have ADHD, I would not be able to do as many of the things that I do — write movies, books, screenplays, the humor column. It’s a creative gift. In fact a lot of writers, especially a lot of comedians, start with ADHD.”

Martin said that in addition to the laughter, he hopes people will walk away from the movie with some spiritual insights.

“That it’s not materialism that fills that void, and it’s not materialism that is going to buy your way into heaven. And the real important things of value are not what they think they are,” he explained. “It’s having a relationship with Jesus Christ. That is more valuable than anything else. It’s our eternity where our treasures are.”

He said his success hasn’t changed his lifestyle much.

“I still like living a really simple life,” he said. “I love my cabin. I still make my moose droppings garlands. I just happen to be doing this stuff as well.”

Eric Lietzke and Summer Hensley, two youth who attended the movie, had praise for it and for Martin.

“I loved the movie, and I think he was an amazing actor,” said Hensley. “I’m really glad I bought the book, and I would definitely want to read the second.”

“He’s just so relatable,” Lietzke said. “I relate completely with him.”

Bradley Williams, president of Holston Home, said he believes the event was successful in sharing the organization’s core message with their youth and the community.

“We want our kids to know that the gospel is not just for people in tough circumstances,” he said. “It’s not just something when you find yourself in a really dark place that this is your kind of ticket out. That may be true but that everybody no matter what their background, no matter where they’re at right now has hope and encouragement in the gospel.”

He added, “We don’t just want to share it on the campus of Holston Home, we want to share it with our friends and neighbors in Greeneville.”

Williams said there will be more community events in the future, including a partnership with Tusculum College’s Fellowship of Christian Athletes. The goal, he said, is to use wholesome fun to share a message.

“The verse that I think is most central to our ministry is Romans 8:28, ‘For all things work together for good for those who love the lord and are called according to his purposes,’” Williams said. “We’ve all got things in our past — regrets, experiences — that we wish were different, but that if we will give those to God, and give our hearts and lives over, it’s amazing how he takes those and uses them for things we can’t even imagine ourselves and to help the world around us.”



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