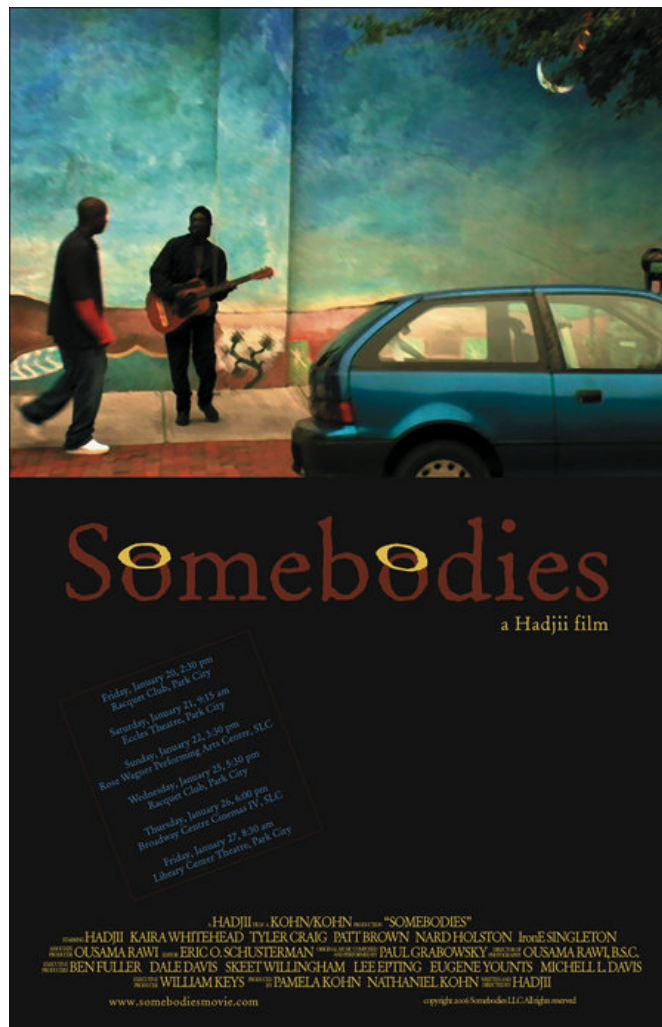


***Somebodies* Film Review:**

“Scottie, do you think an unemployed “just out the joint” thug like me has a chance getting with that girl over there?”...Jonaoh [paraphrased]

“It depends on her self-esteem.”...Scottie [paraphrased]

“When I wrote the script for *Somebodies*, I wanted to make a movie that would truly take advantage of the creative freedom accessible in independent film, and use it to compose a work that depicted young blacks in a way that had not been done before in a comedy, which meant making a movie that unapologetically showed a side of Black life that often goes unnoticed and overlooked: the travails of the guy in the middle”...Hadjii



A Georgia college student comes of age in a world surrounded by eccentric relatives, prankster classmates and ex-cons...IMDB.com

“More entrepreneurial than artistic, writer-director-star Hadjii's first feature "Somebodies" adds up to little more than a series of uninspired skits untethered to any thematic or narrative substance. Exceedingly mild comedy about African-American college students in Athens, Ga., has some laughs, but character depth, story development and filmic style are all close to nil, and production values just a hair above amateur. Looked on as a university project (Hadjii teaches at U. of Georgia, and most extras look like students), it's OK, but "Somebodies" is awfully trifling stuff for the Dramatic Competition at Sundance. Minor small-screen sales are possible.

Scottie (Hadjii) is studying --what, we never find out -- at college and shares a house with four friends. They party a lot, but after nearly getting arrested for DUI and becoming involved with a born-again nymphomaniac (Kaira Whitehead), Scottie makes reluctant stabs at sobriety and celibacy. Scenes sending up adult-literacy programs, "Scared Straight" prison ones, nerdy white and boisterous black churches, and those featuring the protag's Klumps-like older relations, sport some funny dialogue and OK situations. But perfs tend toward shrill, pic's look is drab -- and "Somebodies" remains stubbornly inconsequential.”...Dennis Harvey, *Variety*.

The review written by Dennis Harvey of *Variety* of Hadjii's *Somebodies* is complete and utter cinematic conjecture. I was at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival 9:30 am January 21st *Somebodies* screening and the audience whom was 95% white loved every bit of the film. What people do not know when they read reviews of films from a major film festival like Toronto, AFI or Sundance is that a reviewer has the option to see a film at a sterile, stale and usually emotionless press screening, see the film in the press office or check out the screener to watch at his/her leisure at his home or hotel room. Or one can go see the film with a living breathing audience to gauge accurately if the film played well or poorly. I chose the latter option because I wanted to know if others--who were not like me--would get all the afro-conscious, urban, hip-hop, “dub sack”, “you-my-nigga” jokes that Hadjii carefully and skillfully wove through his brilliant debut independent film that was shot entirely in Athens, Georgia.

It would be far too easy for *Somebodies* to have premiered first at Urban World, ABF or PAFF and see a predominately black audience loving the film. But it is far more important to see how universal Hadjii's humor and social criticism played with an audience that could have walked out, got bored or flat out hated *Somebodies* if it was as “bad” and “uninspired” as the *Variety* review above tried to make the film out to be. I seriously doubt Dennis Harvey was speaking about his experiences watching *Somebodies* with any Sundance audiences. People don't laugh and have a good time to make the filmmaker feel good. If a film is whack its whack. And if its good like *Somebodies* is its good. Too many reviewers like Harvey think it's their duty and sole obligation to evaluate films at festivals in terms of its sales potential to studio execs. Harvey wrote in his review that *Somebodies* had **“Minor small-screen sales are possible”**. This is again more cinematic press conjecture because Harvey has no damn say so or knowledge picking which Sundance film is going to be bought or sold. That's not the job of a good film reviewer. You are supposed to have enough in your intellectual armory to back up your criticisms or defend your praise of a film. Harvey does neither and makes one think in his two paragraph, hastily written film review that Hadjii haphazardly threw some black college life scenes on the screen.



What I liked most about *Somebodies* is that it kept its story simple, funny and on point. We are basically watching a young brotha, Scottie, played by Hadjii, struggle with himself as he tries to get his freak and party on Monday to Saturday and then find salvation and redemption on Sunday. Everyone in the hood, on the block and even now in the burbs that the biggest sinner in the world can also be the most committed to going to church. Hadjii tries to show in his first film that being a churchgoer or keeping faith in one's life is a personal battle between his demons—alcoholism, keeping his grades above failing, avoiding social distractions--family, friends and girlfriend and outside moral judgers—his police officer he owes a DUI debt, his James Brown inspired preacher or his college Christian support group.

What I also liked most about *Somebodies* is that Hadjii found a laidback and natural way to make his character's journey not some big ass deal. Typically in similar white coming of age teen and college films there is some big moral lesson one has to learn at the end of the film after the lead character loses his best friend, loses his girlfriend or loses a big contest or competition. Hadjii keeps the story fresh by throwing in real life issues at odd moments in the story structure. You cannot readily name a big budget collegiate comedy film like *American Pie II*, that has its lead character deal with funny social and academic situations as well as serious subjects like student alcoholism, DUIs, turning one night stands into relationships, HIV and AIDS testing, adult illiteracy, kids going through the "Sacred Straight" program, reverse racism and sexism, a failed drug intervention by his doped and drunk boys, wacky relatives, ex-con cousin's murder, and a nymphomaniac religious girlfriend. All acting performances for me in *Somebodies* were all solid and well done. Many of the cast had acted in Hadjii's short *The Making of Brick City* and a few others came from local auditions. Hadjii wisely chose actors whom were all on the same film experience level. This helped make the film quite balanced and smooth flowing. The actors that stood out the most for me were the unpredictable and hot tempered Diva, Kaira Whithead, the deeply devoted religious fanatic Brad, Chris Burns, and the unconventional Reverend Hill, Tyler Craig. Hadjii did a lot with a low budget and tight shooting restrictions. He has managed to do almost the impossible in Hollywood and make an intelligent non-stereotypical and black comedy that really is funny. Hadjii has a bright future as a director. And Variety better start hiring better film reviewers. I give *Somebodies* four out of five cheesecakes and greatly recommend seeing it.

Sincerely,

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