

## REVIEW

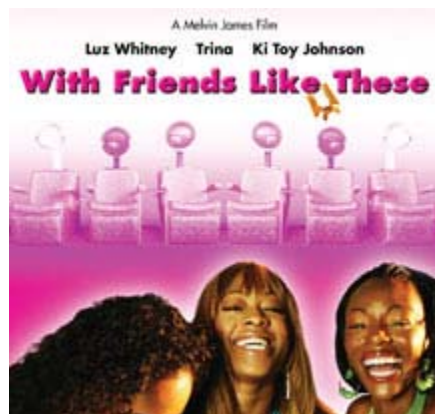
### DVD Review: *With Friends Like These*

September 17, 2006

Matthew Milam

*With Friends Like These* has the word "wrong" written all over it.

The series, which first aired on the Black Family Channel's *Pilot Central* show, tells the tale of Cleo (rapper Trina) who, after losing everything she has, inherits a hair salon from a recently deceased aunt. Along with her friends Suzanne (the actress playing the character is strangely missing from the official cast list) and Kylie (Luz Whitney), the threesome make a go at running the salon and keeping a distance from Naomi (Ki Toy Johnson) who runs a chain of hair salons and is constantly seeking to purchase the property to add to her empire.



It's hard for African-Americans to sell images of themselves in ways that step outside the stereotypes this country puts upon them. I seek and demand those differences when I watch television at night, but to no avail. I'm more than happy to put up with watching a redux of a familiar highlight of the culture. The only catch is that I actually have to like the actors and the characters that they are playing.

The saving grace of *With Friends Like These* is the actress

who plays the token white girl Suzanne. Her above-average performance as the uptight conservative lawyer made it interesting, even to the point of thinking the plot should have been changed. What if the lawyer was the one who inherited a salon in a neighborhood of people she's had no experiences with? You could at least carry that for a couple of seasons and it might actually provide a few laughs compared to the mess of a show the character is in now.

*With Friends Like These* is so bad that I would pay to have all copies burned.

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Matthew Milam lives in Chicago, IL. These articles are also on his personal [blog](#). You can email all comments to [matthewmilam@gmail.com](mailto:matthewmilam@gmail.com). I also have a [myspace page](#), a [Yahoo 360](#) page and a [MSN space](#).

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**Author: Matthew Milam**

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