

# TOYING WITH GOOD FUN

BY MARK EVANS

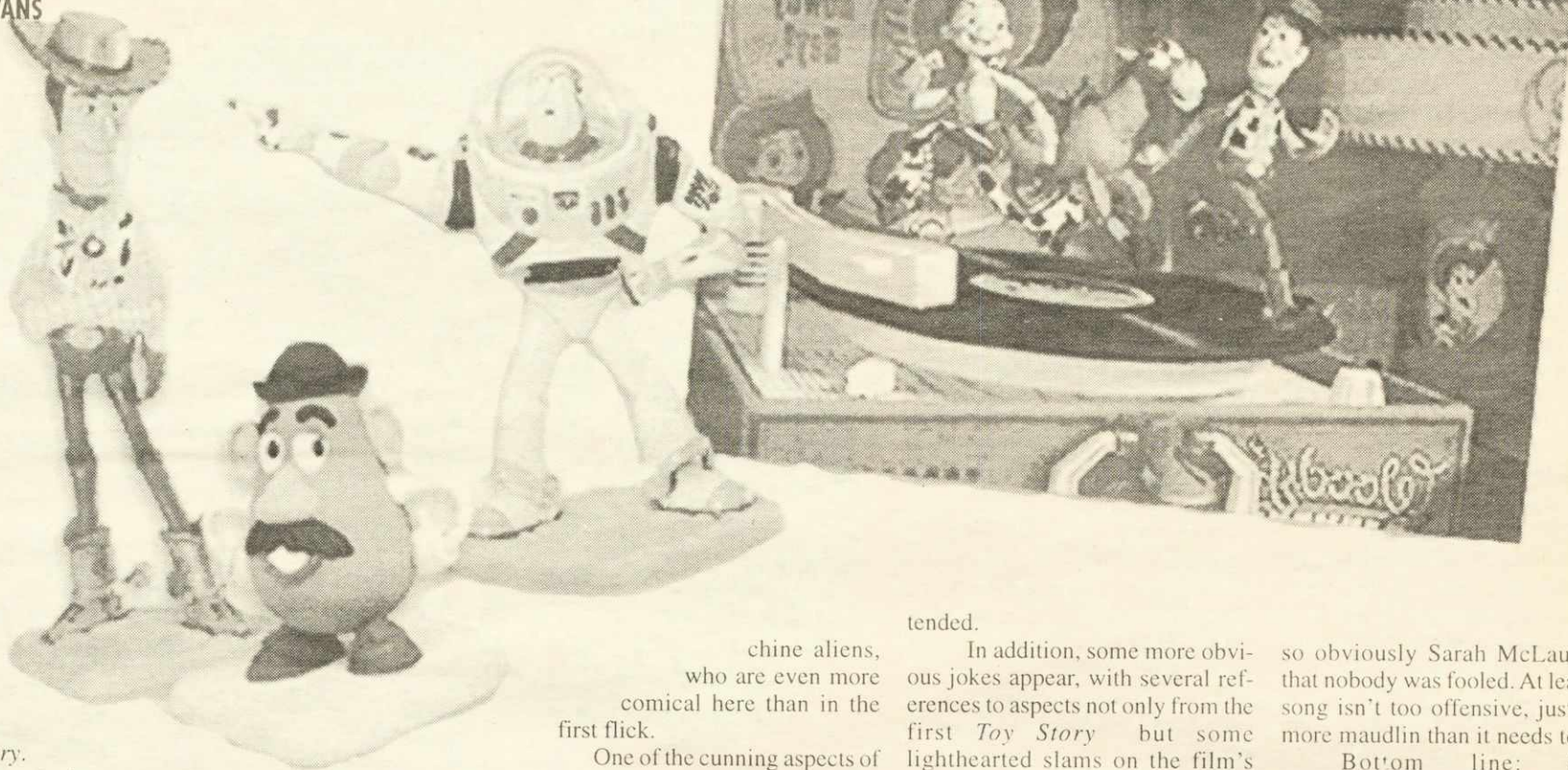
With an urge to see *End of Days* roughly equivalent to that expressed by a dead gazelle being savaged by jackals, the movie of choice for this week was *Toy Story 2*.

Pixar is by far the best section of Disney right now, and they consistently produce well-made films with both warmth and wit. This latest film merely cements their reputation and scores them at three for three.

Unsurprisingly, *Toy Story 2* picks up after — wait for it — the first *Toy Story*.

The plot revolves around cowboy doll Woody (Tom Hanks) being stolen from a garage sale by an unscrupulous toy collector named Al (Wayne Knight). When Woody disappears it's up to Buzz Lightyear (Tim Allen) and the other toys to get him back.

This is far more complicated than it appears, for not only is Woody half-way across town but Al is planning to ship him to Japan as part of a collection of toys from an old TV show called "Woody's Round-Up." Another wrinkle is that Woody discovers he has a family of



sorts in the collection, with Cowgirl Jessie (Joan Cusack), Stinky Pete (Kelsey Grammar), and Bullseye the Horse.

So ensues a tale of friendship — wholesome moral fibre, wrapped in an extremely eye-pleasing computer animated shell. The toys are fun characters, and it's nice to see so many familiar faces from the first film. There are even a couple of welcomed cameos, from Geri, the old man who starred in the short that preceded *A Bug's Life*, and another from the little green vending ma-

chine aliens, who are even more comical here than in the first flick.

One of the cunning aspects of *Toy Story 2* is that the best jokes are not understood by the children in the audience. Watching Buzz run around an airport with a sticker for Butte on his rear end, it is apparent none of the kids realize where the joke lies. There are both subtle and not-so-subtle film parodies; two of the best are a hysterical *Jurassic Park* moment and — not surprisingly — a *Star Wars* joke which is more humorous than originally in-

tended.

In addition, some more obvious jokes appear, with several references to aspects not only from the first *Toy Story* but some lighthearted slams on the film's merchandising.

Not many movies can achieve perfection, and *Toy Story 2* does have a couple detractors. The sequences with Woody are quality fare, but they pale in comparison to the fast-paced and manic sections with Buzz and the other toys. The Disney law of having at least one song in every single animated feature is still in effect, with a little ditty supposedly sung by Jessie which is

so obviously Sarah McLaughlan that nobody was fooled. At least the song isn't too offensive, just a bit more maudlin than it needs to be.

Bottom line: Good lighthearted fun, definitely one of the more enjoyable ways to spend your movie dollar. And hey, if you don't like *Toy Story 2*, it's worth it to see the trailer for *Dinosaur*. Arguably more impressive than the actual film, it's the most breath-taking five minutes of cinema in theatres right now. A well-rounded movie package, three stars out of four, three and a half with trailer included.

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