

Hits and misses for '88: Norm sizes up movie year

By NORMAN WILNER

Last year the film industry set an all-time record for box-office receipts, which is something of a feat considering the growing popularity of home video.

But the real fun of last year's films has yet to come as all of them will be out on video by 1989. Here, then, are the 10 best films of 1987 in this writer's opinion, and their videocassette release dates, where available.

Broadcast News. James L. Brooks' second film, sure to be a favourite at Oscar time. No video release date yet; expect it by September.

Good Morning Vietnam. Robin Williams gives the performance of his life in the best film of the year, hands down. Video by July.

Innerspace. The funniest science-fiction movie of the year, and certainly the most claustrophobic. Martin Short is dazzling, and Dennis Quaid proves that he can play off video monitors for two hours. On tape by late spring.

No Way Out. An excruciatingly tense political thriller, possibly being the best of its kind since *The Manchurian Candidate*. Available on video Feb. 1.

Nuts. Barbra Streisand and Richard Dreyfuss play out an intricate courtroom drama with exactly the right level of comic tension. Superb. Available by late summer.

The Princess Bride. Rob Reiner tops himself once again with a delightful fairy-tale romance/adventure/comedy that feature the always astounding Christopher Guest. On cassette March 20.

Raising Arizona. Fledgling Renaissance filmmakers Joel and Ethan Coen (*Blood Simple*) take a man, a woman, and a baby to make the year's most frenetic comedy. Now available.

River's Edge. The creepiest film of the year. Based on an actual event, a psychotic teenager strangles his girlfriend, makes no attempt to hide it, and even shows his friend the body . . . and no one reports the killing for two days! Features another over-the-top performance by Dennis Hopper. Now available.

Robocop. A genre thriller with a remarkably subversive sense of humour and a terrific star turn by Peter Weller, both in and out of the tin can Robo suit. A stunning new-wave future vision. Available Jan. 28.

Roxanne. Steve Martin writes, executive-produces and stars in this modern Cyrano De Bergerac story, with a terrific assist from Rick Rossovitch as a hunk with very little flair for writing. Now available.

Honourable Mention:

Evil Dead II. A lot more money and a Steadicam can make a difference. Sam Raimi fashions another kinetic horror-comedy, with the best moments coming from a possessed hand attacking its owner.

Ishtar. Okay, it was ridiculously expensive and fatally overhyped. But it's still a relatively entertaining film, with Warren Beatty and Dustin Hoffman as the worst singers in the world. Worth a look.

Hellraiser. Clive Barker directs his first film, a disgusting romantic triangle with a good deal of blood thrown in for good measure. Censored in Ontario, but still an exceptional debut.

Lethal Weapon. A great action picture with terrific performances by Danny Glover, Gary Busey and, best of all, Mel Gibson, who is possibly the only actor alive who can convincingly fake a suicide attempt.

La Bamba. A surprising tribute to a little-known dead rock star. The only problem with this film is that the song has been somewhat overplayed in recent months. Neverthe-



An overlooked classic of sorts: Schwarzenegger is an 'absolute hoot' wearing his spandex jumpsuit, in his latest B-movie *The Running Man*.

less, it's worth seeing.

Harry and the Hendersons. A somewhat disappointing film, elevated to "amazing" status by the title creature, a Bigfoot so articulate that its face expresses more emotion than most of the humans in the picture (John Lithgow and Don Ameche notwithstanding).

The Hidden. A sci-fi/cops-and-robbers/chase movie with a really repulsive alien, two heroic pursuers, and an annoyingly abrupt ending. The first 90 minutes are considerably better than the last two movies listed, though, so the film is still deserving of some praise.

Siesta. Ellen Barkin romps through Spain on a journey of life, death, discovery, and sex in groups. Certainly bizarre, unquestionably riveting.

And then there were the disappointments . . .

The Gate. Kids, a dog, and the demons of Hell don't add up to much more than a foolish Canadian movie with some spectacular special effects. Almost worthless.

Fatal Attraction. A manipulative little shit of a film, inexplicably popular and in fact the only autumn film to survive through the Christmas season as a major success. Glenn Close's performance is stunning, but the film itself is just a cheap remake of *Play Misty for Me*, done over a dozen years ago by Clint Eastwood, of all people!

Can't Buy Me Love. An atrocious teen comedy which brutally misuses a classic Beatles song for no apparent reason. And this is from the same

company that produced *Good Morning, Vietnam!*

An overlooked classic of sorts:

The Running Man. Arnold Schwarzenegger, after the straightness of *Raw Deal* and *Predator*, finally finds an arch-enemy sleazy enough to give him a run for his money . . . Richard Dawson! Arnold's greatest performance, which features the world's loudest Hawaiian shirt, cannot go unmentioned here, and is worthy of some kind of award. Perhaps a large, monogrammed Spandex jumpsuit . . . but he already has one of those. Oddly enough, this is the first Arnold film that hasn't been attacked by critics since *Terminator*, proving that even serious film journalists can have a collective sense of humour. An absolute hoot.

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