

The good, the bad, and the ugly...

by Glenn St-Germain

Summertime is one of the two major release times for the movie studios. The filmmakers tend to save their best releases for summer and Christmastime, since it is during these times that more people go to movies.

The releases during this past summer were typical of the summer movie season, including a wide variety of motion pictures that were for the most part escapist in nature. Social relevance seems to have died out as a method of moviemaking.

Fantasy films did well. Several films had unusual, unearthly, or just plain weird settings and/or plot devices to carry things along.

Two films featured stars that weren't even played by humans. Rather, they were group special effects efforts. *Short Circuit* starred an army robot who somehow gained self-awareness and *Howard the Duck* starred a humanoid duck from outer space.

The ultimate fantasy film was *Labyrinth*. David Bowie co-starred with the creations of Jim Henson in a weird, amazing, fantasy film complete with goblins, monsters, and other strange critters. Bowie himself was on camera for only a short time, but performed well.

Another G-rated movie, *Flight of the Navigator*, a Disney product, combined a *Twilight Zone* atmosphere with some high-tech weirdness and came up with a thoroughly enjoyable film.

Remakes and sequels had their days this summer, with more of them than ever, or so it seemed. While the release date for *Star Trek IV* was pushed back to December, *Polyester II*, sans Spielberg, hit the screens with a minor impact. *The Fly*, a remake of the immortal classic that starred Vincent Price, was made by Canadian horror king David Cronenberg. Jeff Goldblum played the mad scientist; this film is the movie for those who like being grossed out of their skulls.

Another horror remake was *Invasion from Mars*. The original was a low-budget B-movie in the early fifties. The 1986 version followed the original so closely that even the cliches were copied.



Big Man On Campus Rodney Dangerfield goes Back to School.

The best of the sequels was *Aliens*, followup to the sci-fi horror flick *Alien*. Sigourney Weaver returns to the alien world with some space marines to fight off not one, but a whole horde of alien nasties. Scary stuff, and quite enjoyable.

Less adequate was *Karate Kid II*, which failed to capture the charm of the first part. For sheer overkill, *Friday the 13th Part VI* featured yet another tale of Jason, the psycho in the hockey mask. As if that weren't bad enough, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* has just been released.

Another sequel, *Psycho III*, had little of the Hitchcock touch, but wasn't that bad either.

This summer will also feature a sequel to a remake when *The Lost City of Gold* is released in a few weeks. This is the sequel to last year's *King Solomon's Mines*, which starred Richard Chamberlain in a campy adventure film sendup; the original thirty years ago was a serious film with Stu Granger.

The most popular movie type of the summer is comedy. 1986 was no exception. This summer the trend continued but movies moved away from the mindless screwball comedy toward something with a little more intelligence.

The summer screwball comedy of years past followed a simple formula: a sunny, warm setting (usually a beach), a cast made up of a motley collection of stock characters,

Club Paradise, at least, had a recognizable cast: Robin Williams and Peter O'Toole (Peter O'Toole?) starred alongside former *Saturday Night Live* and *Second City* regulars. It even had a plot that went (barely) beyond the predictable fluff, which is more than can be said for *One Crazy Summer*, a mindless comedy filled with unfunny gags.

Nonetheless, the comedies of 1986 were for the most part more intelligent than that. *Running Scared* starred Billy Crystal and Gregory Hines as a couple of detectives ready to retire to Florida in an underrated police comedy. *A Fine Mess* featured Ted Danson and Howie Mandel in a Blake Edwards farce.

Another semi-intelligent comedy was *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, with Matthew Broderick as a high-school student looking for the perfect leisure activity. More school antics



and a plot involving a search for parties, drugs, sex, or a combination of the above. This summer, audiences were spared the strain of the onslaught of such films in that only two really made it to the screen: *Club Paradise* and *One Crazy Summer*.

appeared when Rodney Dangerfield went *Back To School*.

Jim Belushi helped explore the ins and outs of relationships in *About Last Night*, an off-the-wall comedy. More cerebral was *Hannah and her Sisters*, a Woody Allen look

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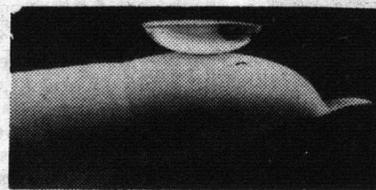
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