

Review: 'Best Defense' a big disappointment

By SHAWN BEHLEN
Staff Reviewer

Somebody had a great idea. How about putting Dudley Moore and Eddie Murphy in a movie together? They're both hot right now. The film should be a gold mine. Just an hour and a half of improvisation from the two of them would be worth the price of admission. No way the film could turn out bad, right?

Wrong! "Best Defense" really is a waste of talent. Don't get me wrong. It's not a total loss — it does have some funny moments. But, when compared to what it could have been, it just doesn't measure up.

The biggest problem with the film is the time jumps. About 75 percent of the film takes place in California in 1982 with Dudley Moore, and the rest takes place in the deserts of Kuwait in 1984 with Eddie Murphy. Believe it or not, the two of them never even meet. Fourteen time jumps back and forth are used to open the film, then Moore takes over during the middle and then even more time jumps are used to close the film.

Moore is cast as Wylie Cooper, an engineer who has hit the bottom of the barrel. He has lost so many jobs and moved so many times that his wife tells him he's out of the house if he screws up even one more time. He is now working at Dynatech, an industrial defense plant on the verge of bankruptcy.

The film begins with the testing of his latest creation — a DYP gyro for the missile guidance system of the Army's XM-10 Supertank. Needless to say, it does not pass and Dynatech creeps closer to the edge.

So, by chance, Cooper runs into another engineer in a bar who is fixing to give secret plans to someone he thinks he is the commander of the KGB. For some reason, he tells Cooper all of this and then, at the last moment, slips the plans into Cooper's briefcase instead.

The next day Cooper finds the computer disc in his briefcase, slips it into his Dynatech computer and, lo and behold, finds a breakthrough design for a DYP gyro. Now, is he a lucky guy or what? From there, Cooper decides to claim the design and falls into the world of industrial espionage.

Ten thousand miles away and two years later, Lieutenant Landry, played by Eddie Murphy, is the one who gets to test the Army's new XM-10 Supertank. The test is a fiasco. Landry and his Kuwaiti crew become lost, wander into the battle zone and are forced to fight.

The time jumps supposedly keep the audience wondering if Cooper fixed the DYP or if Landry is going to blow sky high. You can probably guess what happens.

Aside from the time jumps, another questionable aspect of the film is its portrayal of women. Kate Capshaw ("Indiana Jones") plays Laura, Cooper's wife, and Helen Shaver ("The Osterman Weekend") plays Claire Lewis, his would-be mistress. Both Laura and Claire are incredibly vicious women. Any red-blooded male would hunt for cover with these two around. Cooper barely stands a chance.

Also, the profanity in the film is just a bit much. I expected it from Murphy, but Moore out-cusses him about three to one. As any Murphy fan can attest, profanity can be hilarious, but there is a limit.

As for performances, Murphy wins hands-down. When he is on the screen, the convoluted plot really doesn't matter. The man is just too funny to let a script get the best of him. Reportedly, Murphy improvised much of his dialogue (including the infamous "Now, do Michael Jackson" scene) and it is a big help. Moore, on the other hand, comes across as a sex-starved and sober Arthur.

The other stand-out besides Murphy is David Rasche, formerly in "Manhattan" and "An Unmarried Woman." Rasche plays the KGB agent and is a riot. I would have loved to have seen him and Murphy in scenes together. Why Moore got so much time and those two didn't is beyond me.

Overall, despite great moments, the film is a disappointment. If you've been waiting to see it — expecting a great comedy (like I was) — calm down. Murphy and Moore just can't save it.



Eddie Murphy in "Best Defense"

Rod Stewart's not so great this time

"Camouflage"

Rod Stewart

By KARL PALLMEYER
Staff Reviewer

Rod Stewart, one of the best singers in rock'n'roll history, has done it again—he has released one of the worst albums in rock'n'roll history.

Stewart's work with the Jeff Beck Group and the Faces and his early solo work was a good combination of folk, blues, soul and hard rock'n'roll. Now Stewart seems to be more interested in image than in music. Since his "Foot Loose and Fancy Free" album in 1977, Stewart has gone steadily down hill. "Camouflage" is no exception.

There are two major problems with the album: the music and the lyrics. The heavy use of synthesizers makes the album sound like it was written at a computer programmers' convention. The lyrics are nothing but "I'm Rod, I'm hot, I'm sexy, don't you want me?"

Three of the tracks feature Jeff Beck on guitar. For some reason Beck decided to imitate Eddie Van Halen instead of playing something original on "Infatuation" and "Bad For You." Beck's guitar on Stewart's



Rod Stewart

version of Todd Rundgren's "Can We Still Be Friends" is a lot better but is almost lost in the synthesizer.

The title track, "Camouflage," could have been a good solo song if Stewart would have used less synthesizer and more horns. Stewart has proven that he is great soul singer on his versions of Sam Cooke songs on his earlier albums.

There are a couple of songs on the album that are okay. The synthesizer on "Some Guys Have All the Luck" provides a good background for Gary Herbig's saxophone solo. "Heart is on the Line" also has a good, but unfortunately short, saxophone solo.

Album courtesy Camelot Music

Politics have become too dull for prime time

United Press International

NEW YORK — Don't blame the networks if political conventions no longer provide the high drama and suspense of real live television, said TV consultant Jack Hilton. The political parties themselves are the culprits.

Hilton, TV consultant and producer for 305 of the Fortune "500" corporations who also has advised some 500 political candidates, said party rules and endless rounds of primaries and caucuses have made convention watching pretty ho-hum. "They used to be called nominating conventions," Hilton said. "That now is a misnomer. It's a coronation. There's little or nothing new."

Hilton, who was a commentator for WCBS New York at the Democratic convention in San Francisco last week, said network officials told him they did better than expected in the ratings for the four days of convention coverage.

"They expected to get approximately one-third of their normal ratings, with the same expected for (the Republican national convention in) Dallas next month," Hilton said. "They did somewhat better — almost one-half their normal ratings."

But in the heyday of televised conventions, Hilton observed, viewers stayed up half the night watching the hoopla because no one really knew who was going to win the nomination.

"In 1960, (John F.) Kennedy participated in only six primaries," Hilton said.

The maneuvering on the floor in Los Angeles as Stuart Symington, Adlai Stevenson, Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey's soldiers scrambled for support was for real.

NBC's average rating for its 29 hours of coverage of the 1960 Democratic convention won 41 percent of the viewing audience. CBS's equivalent coverage held 31 percent and the infant ABC won 12 percent for a total of 84 percent.

Of course, TV viewers didn't have much else to watch in those days.

But they watched. By the time Walter Mondale, Jesse Jackson and Gary Hart got to San Francisco last week, they'd been through 30 primaries and caucuses — and so had TV viewers.

Summer is a season of re-runs, but enough is enough! The meager eight hours of common coverage the three networks gave the Democratic convention won CBS an average 15 percent of the audience, ABC 14 percent and NBC 14 percent for a total of 43 percent.

"Dallas will be even less dramatic," Hilton said.

"It will be four nights of (deputy chief of staff) Michael Deaver presents Ronald Reagan. A regular Busby Berkeley production," Hilton said referring to the 1930s mogul famous for his kaleidoscopic girlie numbers.

As for debates, Hilton said he doubted Reagan would agree to Mondale's request for six televised matches, and he thought it would be a GOP disaster if Vice President George Bush faced off with Mondale running mate Geraldine Ferraro.

"I predict the Republicans will agree to debate no more than once or twice and both times it will be Reagan-Mondale."

"It would be folly for the Republicans to permit Bush to debate with Ferraro."

"First, I expect he would lose; they'd have little or nothing to gain even on the remote chance he'd win, and it would have to be contrary to the Republican strategy to permit the ticket to be split. Their strategy must be to focus the campaign wholly on Reagan versus Mondale."

"If I was Reagan's campaign manager, I'd hope Bush would be spending the next couple months attending funerals and NATO conferences in places no closer than Belgium."

Hilton said oratory made for some good television during the Democratic convention, especially the speeches by Jackson and New York Gov. Mario Cuomo.

"Gary Hart, whom I followed through the primaries, was somewhat disappointing and Walter Mondale was Walter Mondale — need I say more? Let's be charitable and call it tepid."

Mondale, as a political speaker, is a victim of his background, Hilton said.

"He is the product of a strict, Midwestern upbringing in which the virtues of modesty, restraint, self-effacement were not only ingrained but in-bred."

Hilton observed that Mondale's father, a Methodist preacher, would spank his son if he made a spectacle of himself in public.

But TV images shouldn't be everything, the professional TV image-maker said.

"It's impossible for a person to make an informed decision on whom to vote for based solely on TV impressions. If you want to know where someone stands on the issues, it's important to follow the newspapers."

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