

Movie preview: big-money sequels highlight, dominate summer season

By TODD STONE
Of The Battalion Staff

This summer's movie season is making a tradition of last year's flood of sequels.

With the successful sequels to "Ghostsbusters," "Indiana Jones" and "Lethal Weapon," and the inability of the movie industry to consistently release creative films, more sequels were inevitable.

The films "Die Hard 2" and "Back To The Future 3" are this summer's big-production sequels, and both have the most potential of being hits.

The strength of "Die Hard 2" is the return of star Bruce Willis and most of the excellent supporting cast of the first "Die Hard" — including William Atherton's popular role as the cold-hearted aggressive newsman, Dick Thornberg.

If new director Renny Harlin is as slick with the action as former director John McTiernan, "Die Hard 2" should be a big money maker.

Robert Zemeckis returns with co-screenwriter Bob Gale to finish the "Back To The Future" trilogy. Since the film will not have the cliffhanger ending of the first sequel, "3" should be as satisfying as the original.

Zemeckis is one of the best comedic directors around, and with the return of stars Michael J. Fox, Christopher Lloyd and Lea Thompson, "Back To The Future 3" could be the best of the trilogy.

"Exorcist 3" is coming, and it features the screenplay writer of the first film, William Peter Blatty. George C. Scott stars, which offers promise. However, Blatty is making his directorial debut. It's a scary endeavor considering another well-known horror author, Stephen King, failed miserably as a director with "Maximum Overdrive."

I guess "Young Guns 2" was made because the first film was somehow profitable. At best, "Young Guns"

was a mediocre western. Money is the only reason a sequel to an average film is made.

Certainly, it won't be difficult matching the quality of the first "Young Guns." Emilio Estevez, Keifer Sutherland and Lou Diamond Phillips return. Who cares.

Eddie Murphy and Nick Nolte team up again for "Another 48 Hours." They had great screen chemistry in the first "48 Hours," but I have my doubts since Murphy helped write the story, an endeavor he has failed at in the past.

Murphy and Paramount Pictures were sued and lost because Murphy's script for "Coming To America" was too similar to a story by writer Art Buckwald.

Murphy's story contributions to "Beverly Hills Cop 2" did not equal the quality of the first, and his screen play for "Harlem Nights" was a bomb. Still, it's tough to bet against Murphy.

Another sequel of interest where the star helps with production is "Two Jakes," the follow-up film to "Chinatown." Jack Nicholson will direct and star.

However, there are more than just sequels to this summer's movie selection. The controversial comedian Andrew Dice Clay will appear in his first starring role with "The Adventures of Ford Fairlane."

Clay has found success as a touring comedian, but his crude humor has been branded sexist by many in Hollywood, leading to the highly publicized "Saturday Night Live" Clay-boycott by scheduled performer Sinead O'Connor and SNL regular Nora Dunn.

It will be interesting to see if Clay is taken seriously as an actor and not just a crude comedian by the movie masses. Clay also has a concert movie to be released in August.

For the second straight summer, a comic book character is getting all the big production hoopla. Last year



Controversial comedian Andrew Dice Clay makes his debut this summer in the action film, "The Adventures of Ford Fairlane."

it was "Batman." This year it's "Dick Tracy."

Warren Beatty will try to come back from the disastrous film "Ishtar," his only film since the highly acclaimed "Reds." Co-star Madonna hopes "Dick Tracy" will be her step to movie stardom.

"Dick Tracy" will probably be profitable because of the Roger Rabbit cartoon, appearing at the beginning of the film.

With sequels leading the way, this summer should offer some interesting movies for the average movie consumer.

Oingo Boingo performs tight, devilish show

By JOHN RIGHTER
Of The Battalion Staff

HOUSTON - At the end of a marathon two-hour-plus set, Danny Elfman, Hollywood soundtrack wiz and lead singer of Oingo Boingo, walked to the front of the University of Houston's Cullen Auditorium stage, leaned over the applauding audience and showcased his classic devilish grin.

Elfman's trademark "smile from hell" captured the frenetic feel of a performance warped with the bizarre and nostalgic tones of Boingo's decade-long existence.

I know it sounds unbelievable, but Oingo Boingo has been around for ten years folks, and last Wednesday night the results of "Father Time" were sprinkled throughout the intimate Cullen audience. The fact that the straight-laced eight-piece band looked like "My Eight Dads" did not lessen the effects of the time tunnel that has somehow kept America's best new wave band alive and under wraps.

Regardless of age or appearance, though, Elfman and company gave a clinic on live-pop performance.

The cozy confines of Cullen were perfect for Elfman's clear, crisp harmonies and bottemless howls, while the three-piece horn section of "Sluggo" Phipps, Leon Schneiderman and Dale Turner hung beautifully in the acoustic-minded walls. Phipps was especially impressive, plugging away on several sax solos that filled out the group's tight delivery.

Utilizing an array of instruments, Boingo doubled as a mini-orchestra with xylophones, accordions, bongos, chimes, clarinets, trombones, saxophones and trumpets, among the usual mainstays, revving up the groups eclectic throttle.

With Elfman's vocal alterations, ranging from sinister spieler to rapturous crooner, Boingo split the twenty-song set between hyper, full-audience stomps and reticent, structured ballads that showcased the group's recent efforts toward a fuller, more accessible sound.

Neglecting an opening act, the group hit the stage flanked by a large screen that flashed the band's trademark caricatures of Hispanic lore and twisted ghoul.

Immediately, Boingo had the crowd racing with "Dead Man's Party," from the album of the same name, and followed with "When The Light's Go Out," the lead track

from Boingo's latest release, *The End Of The Tunnel*.

Early on, Boingo focused on new material, leaving the retro-ge for later. Elfman introduced funky "Flesh And Blood" as a ber that deals with his favorite subject: Immortality. He described wistful "Skin" as "a song about peeling your skin, which would be very pleasant if you know what I mean."

What was pleasant was Elfman's role as band leader, which he performed to perfection. Flaunting an evil grin, Elfman grooved onstage a cross between Peter Gabriel and David Byrne (particularly the "In The Lifetime" look), providing the group's focal point along with bassist John Avila.

While Elfman was content to entertain with his bizarre facial expressions and subtle, albeit strange movements, Avila became the resident mosher. The tiny bassist monstratively grooved and stomped across the congested stage, stopping to add backup vocals, keyboardist Carl Graves.

Avila also got into the facial expression routine, hamming-it-up synchronized fashion with Elfman and guitarist Steve Bartek.

As the band began to sprinkle the "old glory" of early days, the show really took off. Wild version of "No Spill Blood" and "Sweet From Good For Your Soul" and "Matter" from *Nothing To Fear* topped the night's performance. The audience's on cue delivery catch phrases and hand gestures hanced the songs' white-collar anti-ditty and again reminded of the band's longevity.

Smoking to a finish with "Who You Want To Be," "Not My Sun" and "Only A Lad," Boingo returned for a well-deserved double encore highlighted by "Wild Sex (In The Working Class)" and "Weird Science."

Just before the group closed with the finale "Goodbye," Elfman thanked the audience for their contribution to the evening's fun and informed them that the night performance was the final show of the long tour.

But before returning to his band, Elfman glared out into the audience and swivelled his head from side to side and flashed his Joker "Who you grin one last time."

"Tonight's a fitting end I think," Elfman said. It was.

Vega's 'days' sustains focus, explores humanity's dark side

Suzanne Vega
days of open Hand
A&M Records

By DON ATKINSON JR.
Of The Battalion Staff

On the first listen, Suzanne Vega's new album, *days of open Hand*, can be misleading.

The simplicity of the music coupled with Vega's soft voice suggests an atmosphere of contentment. But on subsequent listenings, the deeper message of the album is revealed.

days of open Hand presents an unflinchingly real portrait of the darker side of humanity. Vega has managed to create an album that explores the pain of loneliness and yet convey a sense of hope.

The first song, "Tired of Sleep-

ing," sets the tone for the entire album. Using a musical arrangement that should be familiar to previous fans of her work, Vega discusses the futility of depression, a theme she returns to many times on the album.

On later tracks, such as "Kusted Pipe" and "Institution Green," Vega collaborates with fellow band member Anton Sanko. His clever use of synthesizers and new age arrangements works well with Vega's folksy acoustic sound and poetic lyrics.

Their collaboration works best on "Room Off The Street," a song that combines strong lyrical imagery with a bouncy, eastern melody. Vega uses a slice-of-life style in describing a man and a woman in a room, together but alone. The man is swept up in political ideology to the point of being oblivious to the woman who is slowly drinking herself to death.

However, the strongest song on the album comes not from Vega's

collaboration with Sanko, but with Philip Glass, an avante-garde composer famous for works such as *Einstein On The Beach* and *Koyaanisqatsi*.

"Fifty-Fifty Chance" uses a string arrangement by Glass that underscores the sadness of Vega's lyrics. The song chronicles the pain of having a loved one close to death.

As the song unfolds, it is revealed that the person hospitalized is a suicide victim. However, the manner in which Vega explains this to the listener is heartbreaking.

"She's going home/ tomorrow at ten," Vega writes. "The question is/ will she try it again?"

The album ends with "Pilgrimage," a song that conveys an underlying sense of hope. Vega seems to be telling us that there is a way out of the pain but that it will not be easy.

"Travel. Arrival./ Years of an inch and a step/ toward a source./ I'm

coming to you/ I'll be there in time."

Overall, "days of open Hand" is Vega's strongest album yet. She seems more focused than ever before. This is most evident in her lyrics which used to resemble novels rather than songs. Her writing style has developed into an amazing simplicity that still manages to convey the complexity of her subject matter.

Credit must also be given to Anton Sanko who has helped Vega broaden her distinctive musical style.

Unfortunately, the album does have its weak moments. Songs like "Book of Dreams" and "Those Whole Girls (Run In Grace)" are not necessarily bad, just out of place. "Book of Dreams" is just too commercial and "Those Whole Girls" never seems to get off the ground.

Still, I definitely recommend this album to anyone tired of a steady diet of love songs and radio fodder.

Mel, Goldie fizzle in film

Bird on a Wire
Starring Goldie Hawn and Mel Gibson
Directed by John Badham
Rated PG-13

By TODD STONE
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The previews sure are tempting — Mel Gibson and Goldie Hawn together in a movie. For fans of the two stars who can't wait to see this film, take my advice.

Wait. Despite the potential screen chemistry between Hawn and Gibson, "Bird on a Wire" is just another mediocre romantic adventure.

Hawn stars as Marianne, a corporate lawyer who stumbles upon her former fiancé, Rick (Gibson), who she believed was killed 20 years ago.

Rick testified against a couple of drug dealers, and he was then forced to play dead to avoid the bad guys. Under the protection of FBI witness re-location, Rick is nomadic, using a variety of identities.

It must have been cinematic coin-

idence that Marianne bumps into Rick the same day the bad guys do. Naturally, they spend the remainder of the film running from the drug dealers.

Just for kicks, the filmmakers throw in a crooked FBI agent to make things more complicated. I just wish they would have made this movie more interesting.

Typical good guy-bad guy action follows with car chases, gun fights and narrow escapes. The action is broken up with moments of Marianne and Rick re-kindling the old flame, but Hawn and Gibson never make the romance interesting.

Surprisingly, director John Badham's action scenes increases pulse rates higher than Hawn or Gibson's sex appeal with roller-coaster angles of typical car and airplane chases.

Badham spends a lot more time on action than Rick and Marianne's relationship. This seems odd because the focus of the promotion seems to rest on Goldie's sweet charm and Gibson's handsome mug.

But I believe screenwriters David Seltzer, Louis Venosta and Eric Lerner are responsible for the lack of significant interplay between Hawn and Gibson.

Oh, there are a few moments

where the two stars make you giggle, but overall, the filmmakers wasted the talents of Gibson and Hawn.

Gibson has a few more amusing moments than Hawn because he had the wily one-liner role. Hawn had to play it straight. Still, Gibson nor Hawn deserve any medals for their performances. At best, they were going through the motions.

I hope Gibson gets to make another "Lethal Weapon" movie, so he can again be an entertaining actor. He has the looks and charm, but not the script.

Hawn desperately needs another "Private Benjamin" or "Swing Shift" if she really wants to revive her movie career.

With the lack of significant character development, Badham probably had no other choice than to concentrate on the action, which carries the film until the climax.

At this point the action is painfully extended, mundane and could have been settled in half the time. The movie ended, and I felt relieved, which is no way to feel after a movie.

Yes, it is Mel and Goldie, but their presence fails to produce an entertaining film. You need a good story for that. "Bird on a Wire" is a golden opportunity that is wasted.

Country artist Keen returns

Texas A&M graduate Robert Earl Keen Jr. will make his grand return to College Station at the Front Porch Cafe this Thursday night. The former roommate and close friend to Lyle Lovett is creating a storm of his own with his three releases — the most recent being *West Textures*.

The country and folk singer/songwriter is a square block in the circle of down-home Texan music, blending multiple influences into his one-man presentation.

Keen draws from the experiences around him in the tradition of great folk, but adds a twist of tongue-in-cheek fantasy to temper the traditionalist feel.

Although he lacks the success and notoriety of Lovett, many observers in Austin feel Keen's varied song-writing style will carry him to par with Lovett in the near future.

Keen follows in the footsteps of fellow Texan songwriters Lovett, Nancy Griffith and Steve Earle, combining rich, descriptive snapshots of middle America with witty, satirical humor, such as Keen's collaboration with Lovett on the "The Front Porch Song."

Keen's performance is scheduled to begin at 9 p.m. with tickets costing \$8.

•JOHN RIGHTER

Activist, singer Trudell draws song inspiration from personal tragedy

NEW YORK (AP) — John Trudell can still remember the date (Jan. 14, 1979), the place (Vancouver, British Columbia) and what he was doing (riding in a car) when he wrote his first lyrics.

"Suddenly, these lines came into my head, 'Gently the rains of purification wash my mind,'" recalled the 44-year-old Trudell, a longtime Indian activist who has recorded several albums of his poetry. "Something told me to write them down and I've been writing since then."

His writing found its way on tape with friend and guitarist Jesse Ed Davis composing backing tracks for two albums. Unable to sign with any record label, Trudell formed Peace Music and released the songs on mail-order cassettes. In 1986, a.k.a. *Graffiti Man* wound up in the hands of Bob Dylan, who called it the best record of the year.

"I think he was doing the Grateful Dead tour that year and he played our tape at his concerts," Trudell recalled. "The effect wasn't monetary at that time. What it was more recognition from other artists."

So rock stars Jackson Browne, George Harrison and Bono became fans, too, and Midnight Oil made Trudell the opening act for their 1988 tour.

But while many of his co-stars are musicians who developed politically, Trudell is an activist now giving live recitals.

"I knew how to handle the stage for myself, but I had never worked it this way, with four or five other people. That's something that I'm not trained for," Trudell said.

Why he began writing is almost too painful to talk about, a time he refers to as "when things changed in my life." In 1979, after Trudell led a march in Washington and spoke out against FBI policy towards Indians, a mysterious fire at his Nevada home killed his wife, his three children and his mother-in-law.

"I realized I needed to survive but surviving isn't enough," Trudell, who soon developed "compulsion" to write. "There had to be something else that goes on. Otherwise, a lot of things their meaning and purpose. I'm trying to figure out how I was to deal with that."

He was born in Omaha, Neb., in 1946, and lived on and off the Navajo Reservation until joining the Navy in 1963.

"I knew the realities in my reservation and life of the reservation and I knew the reality of racism and a whole lot of things. But when I in the military it showed me there were a lot of Indians and the world as far as America was concerned," said Trudell, who served in Vietnam.

He went to college and became leader of the Indian rights movement in the late 1960s, serving as chair of Indians of All Tribes during the occupation of Alcatraz Island in 1969, and heading the American Indian Movement in the '70s as protests took place at Mount More, Washington and Wounded Knee.

"Graffiti Man" includes popular songs such as "Rich Man's War," love songs such as "Stardust Woman." Trudell speaks of his writing as the next new wave in music "because the music industry, with its high tech, has basically gone as it could go, it's stagnant. It's a new infusion of human energy that I think spoken word can be that infusion of human energy."

"People are used to language being spoken, used to being talked to," he said. "In our generation, all the poets got sucked up as musicians and are identified as musicians that put it out of reach of your average person. Poets are within everyone's reach."