

# Film 'Ford Fairlane' falters with uninspired script, emphasis on comic Dice Clay's chauvinist persona

By JOHN RIGHTER  
Of The Battalion Staff

**The Adventures Of Ford Fairlane**  
Starring Andrew Dice Clay, Wayne Newton and Priscilla Presley  
Directed By Renny Harlin  
Rated R

"The Adventures of Ford Fairlane" is as funny as a twice-told joke. And the action is just as stale.

Milking Andrew Dice Clay's (Fairlane) controversial bad-boy image, director Renny Harlin and screenplay writer Daniel Waters (with assistance from James Cappe and David Arnott) deploy every deplorable Dice-man gimmick, including most of the comedian's standup routine.

The action is just as contrived, relying on the usual fast-speed chases, back-alley fisticuffs and multiple explosives. Harlin, who was successful in deriving excitement from a typical action plot with "Die Hard 2," fails to inject any new twists into the developments of "Fairlane."

Likewise, Waters, who wrote the hilarious screenplay for last year's "Heathers," falls short of developing an original and funny line of dialogue.

Harlin and Waters do nothing to separate Clay from his comedic image. Most of "Fairlane" is set to incorporate Clay's routine, developing his persona (fiction or not) as macho, outspoken, chauvinistic scum.

The movie pits Fairlane as a rock-n-roll detective in Los Angeles hired first by his shock disc jockey friend Johnny Crunch (a hilarious Gilbert Gottfried), and then by the beautiful heiress Colleen Sutton (Priscilla Presley), to find a ditty groupie of the band Black Plague.

The onstage death of Black Plague frontman Bobby Black (Vince Neil of Motley Crue) and the electrocution of the sleazy Crunch



Battalion File Photo

Rock n' roll detective Ford Fairlane (Andrew Dice Clay) swaps insults with the disco-jiving Lt. Amos (Ed O'Neill) in "The Adventures of Ford Fairlane."

propel Fairlane into one big disaster after another.

In solving his big case, Fairlane has his car blown up, his house blown up, his prized Jimi Hendrix guitar destroyed, his girlfriend (a termused loosely in this case) thrown out a second-story window (she lives) and his pet koala bear hung from a ceiling fan.

The only thing Fairlane is able to keep intact throughout the movie is

his cockiness and sense of humor.

Just as the dialogue mimics Clay's stand-up routine, Fairlane's setbacks and eventual success (he solves the case and falls onto the "lap of luxury") parallel Clay's career.

For every MTV ban, Saturday Night Live controversy and industry ostracism, there has been a sold-out Madison Square Garden performance or major movie release (two this summer) around the corner to

reward Clay for his impertinence.

Although "Fairlane" falls far short of being a competent action-comedy, it does have a few funny moments and makes some interesting comments on the state of the music industry.

Employing Wayne Newton as the shrewd, corrupt music mogul, Julian Grendel (cute name play) was perfect casting. Grendel epitomizes the industry leader out solely for a fast

buck. He kills, ruins careers and promotes good-looking, talentless saps aimed at destroying the industry (New Kids On The Block?).

One of the more ironic moments of the film is when Grendel, not realizing he is on microphone, gives a lengthy speech, overheard by a crowd of industry-types, on how he is methodically destroying music by injecting it with his pop clones.

Coming from a '60s pop-cover

artist turned Las Vegas showroom man, the dialogue was quite descriptive of both the character and the actor behind it.

Likewise, Clay and Waters take several shots at MTV, even alluding to Clay's ban from the station. Most hilarious, though, were the shots (probably inadvertently) taken at Neil through his character Black.

First, Black enters his final performance in a blaze of flames, then halfway into the first song begins to choke to death. The unsuspecting audience cheers wildly thinking Black's death is just another theatrical stunt.

Then at Black's funeral, tickets are scalped and sold to thousands of heartbroken fans, who mob his glass casket before it is knocked rolling down the hill with the delirious mob chasing after it (sounds like the funeral of a certain Middle-Eastern demagogue we all know and love).

The final and most humorous shot is the reference to Black's anti-drug work. Fairlane cracks that he found out all the junkie artists do the anti-drug commercials when they need money for their habit.

The funny part is that Neil, in an interview with "Spin" (January issue), admitted he was "loaded" (and still addicted) when he did his "Rock Against Drugs" commercial for MTV and other anti-drug ads.

"Ford Fairlane" works best as a parody of the music industry and of Clay. Clay is not a total disaster in the lead role, but he certainly does nothing to dilute his typecast as the obnoxious, egotistical jerk.

Robert Englund as Smiley, a wacked-out hit man and Ed O'Neill (of Fox's "Married With Children") as the disco-jiving Lt. Amos (anus to Fairlane) are both good, as are Gottfried and Newton.

It's hard, though, to recommend "Fairlane" even to Clay fans, since the funniest material is old and used. "Fairlane" might be worth a dollar (if you accept the notion that Clay's chauvinism and prejudice is just a routine), but I can't say it's worth anymore.

# Guitarist Belew incorporates influences in strong, slick release 'Young Lions'

By JOHN RIGHTER  
Of The Battalion Staff

**Adrian Belew**  
*Young Lions*  
Atlantic

*Young Lions* is the fifth solo release from one of the most important session men of the last 15 years. Adrian Belew has apparently been an observant understudy, for the former singer and guitarist of King Crimson, and present axeman for David Bowie, has successfully blended the influences of his various session bosses into this alternative chart-topper.

Already supported by the hit "Pretty Pink Rose," a duet with Bowie, *Young Lions* is a slick, diverse album that allows traces of King Crimson, Bowie, Talking Heads and Laurie Anderson to slip through. Belew doesn't shamelessly copy from them, but he does selectively borrow, which is definitely excusable given the credentials of the above artists and his past ties to them.

Belew has long been recognized as a top guitarist. His innovative work on King Crimson's *Discipline*, an outstanding and bizarre album, Frank Zappa's wild *Sheik Yerbouti* and Talking Heads' *Remain In Light* (one of the '80s best releases) played major roles in propelling these works to their critical success.

*Young Lions*, entirely Belew's work, takes a chunk from these works. Belew performs almost all of the album's vocals and instruments, as well as writing eight of the 10 tracks and producing the album.

Taking the reins, Belew alternates *Young Lions* between avant-numbers flavored with guitar twangs and cushiony ELO-type "pop" songs.

The album's best work is Belew's partnership with Bowie on "Pretty Pink Rose" and "Gunman" and the enigmatic "I Am What I Am," a song built around a wailing guitar and a funky radio sample of a charismatic evangelist.

Both "Pretty Pink Rose" and "Gunman" are tight, aggressive gui-



Battalion File Photo

Adrian Belew (left) teamed with David Bowie on "Pretty Pink Rose" and "Gunman" from Belew's fifth release, "Young Lions."

tar numbers slickened by Bowie's strained harmonies.

Elsewhere, Belew opts for the '70s pop sound on the environmentally-concerned "Looking For A U.F.O." and on his cover of the Traveling Wilburys' "Not Alone Anymore."

The environment aspect resurfaces on "Men In Helicopters," a song touched off by Belew's interest in animal preservation, and the title track, a descriptive tale of the African wilderness.

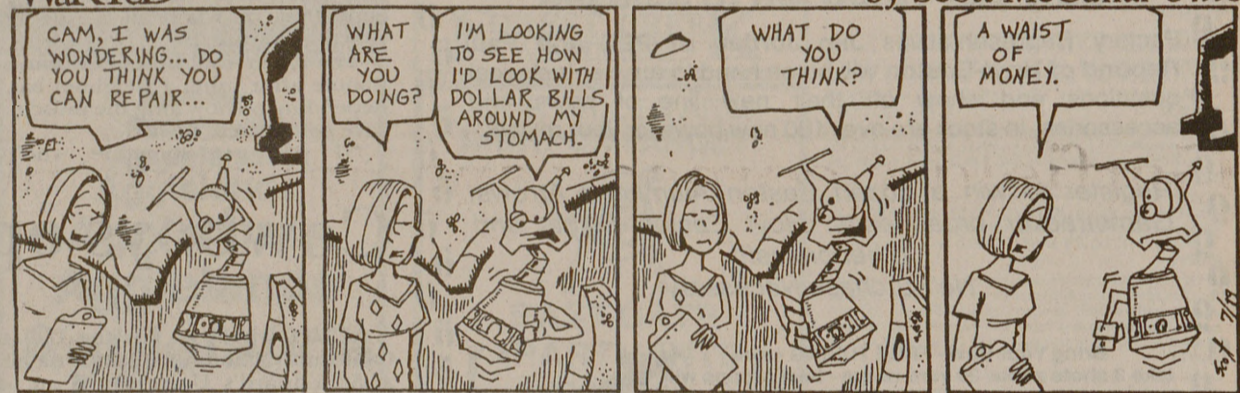
*Young Lions* is a catchy pop al-

bum smartly punctured at the right stops with avant wanderings to keep it "collegiate" (for you elitists). It employs the tape loop and almost spoken word a la Laurie Anderson, the wailing guitar a la Belew's work with King Crimson, the African drum beats picked up from his stay with Talking Heads and finally adds the popability of the master, David Bowie.

Belew has played with the best, and on *Young Lions*, he has applied this experience well.

## WARD

by Scott McCullar © 1990



# Soul II Soul strengthens own musical conviction with '1990-A New Decade'

By JOHN RIGHTER  
Of The Battalion Staff

**Soul II Soul**  
*Vol II-1990-A New Decade*  
Virgin

Soul II Soul follows its 1989 debut, *Keep On Movin'*, arguably the most significant album of last year, with one of '90's best releases.

*Vol II-1990-A New Decade* is a continuation of bandleader Jazzie B's formulation of soul, hip hop and ragamuffin. Jazzie B is the conductor and coordinator of Soul II Soul, a front he claimed is used to crush black stereotypes perpetuated by the media (May issue "Spin").

The movement of the black artist as social reformer has been labeled the "Funky Dread Vanguard," and includes among others, Spike Lee, Yo! MTV Rap's Fab Five Freddie (who appears on *Vol II's* last track) and Jazzie B.

*Vol II-1990-A New Decade* is not as eclectic in its style as it is in its personnel. Jazzie B, the only stable figure in Soul II Soul, alternates vocalists on each track, excluding the album's two instrumentals.

The different female singers (there are two male-tandem tracks and some backup vocals that include Jazzie B) add diversity to Jazzie B's soulful hip hop blend of minimalist orchestration through each number's vocal focus that allows the singer to apply her (or his) own flavoring.

Do not be misled by my reference to Soul II Soul's music as minimalist. Jazzie B's arrangements are slickly devised and solidly delivered by his group. Deep, punctuated bass lines, restrained, but varied percussion, timely horns and filler keyboards serve out most of the album's rhythm, devising a soothing ambience that still maintains a solid edge. The unpretentious arrangements

are the perfect complement to the album's vocals, placing the emphasis where it is most deserved.

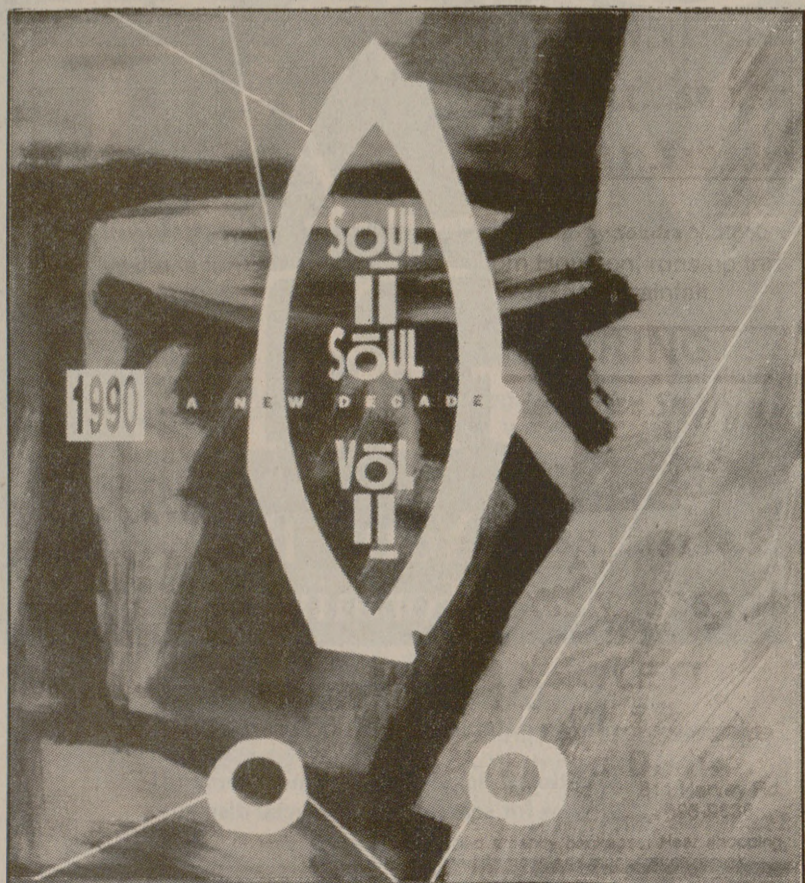
From the opening "Get A Life," *Vol II's* first single, it is the diverse, but roundly impressive list of singers that make *Vol II* such a strong release.

Critics have followed Jazzie B's claim that *Vol II* is as equally deserving of accolades for the power of its lyrics. In all honesty, I found the words, outside of "Get A Life" and "1990-A New Decade," to be largely forgettable. Otherwise, the lyrics largely reverberate cliché soul senti-

ments of love and harmony.

I can accept the notion that the success of a group like Soul II Soul might carry a powerful message to black and white entertainers, but this is do to the amazing professionalism of Jazzie B's cast, and not to his lyrics.

Still, *Vol II* is an outstanding and diverse collaboration, slickly mixed and produced by Jazzie B. The soulful, pop appeal transcends a black-urban contemporary audience and is just as worthy of alternative ears. For this, *Vol II* might be the year's most accessible release, as well as one of its strongest.



## IN FULL EFFECT

By Eric V. Lewis

