

Entertainment Outlook

1989 was a box office bonanza for films

FILMETER



ROBERT DIMATTEO

1989 was the best year at the box office ever, with a handful of super-hot movies bringing in a lion's share of the money. But, unless you're on the payroll at Universal Pictures or Paramount, the news is less than thrilling. Only the breakthrough of a trio of low-budget independent films — "Do the Right Thing," "Heathers," and "sex, lies, and videotape" — can be considered encouraging.

Here, then — in alphabetical order — are some of the top achievements of the year. Don't despair if you haven't heard of a few. They may be opening in your area soon; if not, most are, or will be, available on home video.

HENRY V — Kenneth Branagh's new rendition of the Shakespeare play is a work of at least as much *chutzpah* as Olivier's 1945 classic: It's a strikingly anti-heroic film of a heroic play.

HIGH HOPES — English director Mike Leigh's view of Margaret Thatcher's England is social comedy with rude, biting power.

JAN SVANKMAJER: ALCHEMIST OF THE SURREAL — Eight dazzling, strange short films by the Czech master Svankmajer, perhaps the most brilliant animator now working.

LET'S GET LOST — Bruce Weber — the photographer responsible for a lot of those male-worshipping Calvin Klein ads — turned out to be the right man to make this extraordinarily evocative documentary about jazz trumpeter/junkie Chet Baker.

THE LITTLE MERMAID — The most delightful Disney animated movie in years, and the one picture released in 1989 that is truly for the whole family.

MY LEFT FOOT — This biography of Christy Brown — the Dubliner who triumphed over cerebral palsy to become a celebrated painter and writer

fresh, idiosyncratic comedy of contemporary manners, intertwining the fates of four people in Baton Rouge.

VALMONT — Bad timing, good movie. Many critics have been hard on Milos Forman's version of the same Choderlos de Laclos novel that fueled "Dangerous Liaisons." But it's a fine movie in its own right, offering a more sweeping, social view of the period erotic tale.

WHEN HARRY MET SALLY — It may be a yuppie-era knock-off of Woody Allen's "Annie Hall," but this Rob Reiner-directed romantic comedy has its own good-natured charm and humor.

RUNNERS-UP: "Born on the Fourth of July," "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade," "Distant Voices, Still Lives," "Friendship's Death," "A Taxing Woman's Return," "Brightness," "The Fabulous Baker Boys," "True Love," "Enemies: A Love Story," "Thelonus Monk: Straight No Chaser," "Triumph of the Spirit," "Crimes and Misdemeanors," "Story of Women."

BEST ACTOR: Daniel Day-Lewis ("My Left Foot"), Morgan Freeman ("Driving Miss Daisy"), Jack Nicholson ("Batman"), Tom Cruise ("Born on the Fourth of July"), James Woods ("True Believer"), Nick Nolte ("New York Stories"), Al Pacino ("Sea of Love").

BEST ACTRESS: Michelle Pfeiffer ("The Fabulous Baker Boys"), Jessica Tandy ("Driving Miss Daisy"), Annette Bening ("Valmont"), Andie MacDowell ("sex, lies, and videotape"), Ellen Barkin ("Sea of Love"), "Johnny Handsome"), Winona Ryder ("Great Balls of Fire," "Heathers").

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR: Martin Short ("The Big Picture"), Sean Connery ("Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade"), Danny Aiello ("Do the Right Thing"), Beau Bridges ("The Fabulous Baker Boys"), Marlon Brando ("A Dry White Season").

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS: Dianne Wiest ("Parenthood," "Cookie"), Laura San Giacomo ("sex, lies, and videotape"), Lena Olin and Anjelica Huston ("Enemies: A Love Story"), Mary Stuart Masterson ("Immediate Family").

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BOOLIE WERTHAN (Dan Aykroyd) hires a chauffeur, Hoke Colburn (Morgan Freeman), to drive his mother — crotchety old Southern, Jewish matriarch Daisy Werthan (Jessica Tandy) — in "Driving Miss Daisy."

BATMAN — The big box-office winner is also a wonderfully atmospheric, darkly funny entertainment: Wagner for the comic-book crowd.

CASUALTIES OF WAR — Brian DePalma's study of the rape of a young Vietnamese woman by a squad of American soldiers may be the most concentrated, emotional and visually arresting of all Vietnam movies.

DO THE RIGHT THING — Spike Lee's controversial portrait of simmering racial tensions in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn ends up muddled, but the first two-thirds are full of funky insights.

DRIVING MISS DAISY — An almost perfectly realized transcription of Alfred Uhry's Pulitzer-winning play about the relationship between an Atlanta Jew (Jessica Tandy) and her black chauffeur (Morgan Freeman).

DRUGSTORE COWBOY — Gus Van Sant's offbeat, low-budget triumph looks at a quartet of young addicts who rob pharmacies to support their habits. This movie says more about why people do drugs than a dozen moralistic exposés.

HEATHERS — New director Michael Lehmann and young screenwriter Daniel Waters collaborated on this audacious pitch-black satirical comedy that parodies John Hughes-style teen flicks.

— follows the form of many inspirational illness-of-the-week TV-movies. However, it has a fierce passion (and lustiness) rare for the genre, and a magnificent performance by Daniel Day-Lewis as Christy.

ROGER & ME — Fledgling filmmaker Michael Moore returned to his hometown of Flint, Mich., to make this marvelously engaging yet searing documentary about the closing of a General Motors plant and its effect on an entire community.

SEA OF LOVE — The year's best thriller, this contemporary film noir spins a haunting web of passion and deceit. Al Pacino and Ellen Barkin sizzle.

SEX, LIES, AND VIDEOTAPE — Shot for only \$1.2 million, Steve Soderbergh's first film is a startlingly

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band says it is. Please settle this for me. — P.T., Abilene, Texas.

A. One for your side. It was Stan Shaw.

Q. Whatever became of the person (female) who played Peter Pan in a film in the '20s? She acted under the name of Betty Bronson, but I believe her real name was Jeannette Perry. Is she still alive? — A.G.R., Eureka, Calif.

A. Betty Bronson — and that was her real name, by the way — died in '71, when she was 65. She had a fine film career in the '20s and '30s — she was the leading lady in "Ben Hur" in '36 and Al Jolson's co-star in "The Singing Fool" in '27. She even did a small role in "Evel Knievel" the year she died.



Ellen Corby

Finola Hughes

Q. I watch the daytime soap "General Hospital," and I was wondering if the lovely actress who plays Anna Lavery is the same actress who played the dancer in the John Travolta movie "Saturday Night Fever"? — V.P., Copperas Cove, Texas.

A. Her name is Finola Hughes and she did dance with Travolta, but in "Stayin' Alive," not "Saturday Night Fever."

Q. Is Ellen Corby, who played Grandma Walton on "The Waltons," still alive? If so, what is she doing now? — J.H., Bristol, Va.

A. Corby suffered a stroke in '79, and was, therefore, unable to appear on the series during its last season (except for one notable reunion show). She is still living, but unable to work any more.

Q. Where can I purchase a video of "The Last Temptation of Christ" with Willem Dafoe? I thought it was a tremendously powerful movie that did not get a fair chance in the theaters. I saw it while on vacation in a large city and would like to see it again. — L.T., Lufkin, Texas.

A. The videocassette for the movie has been released. I would suggest you keep checking with your local video store.

Q. Was Kene Holliday, who used to be on "Matlock," in the '86 movie "The Gladiator"? I say the actor in that film is not Holliday, but my hus-

Q. Are the actors who play Peter Brady in the old "Brady Bunch" series and Tad Martin in the soap opera "All My Children," brothers? — M.N., Atlantic, Iowa.

A. No. Michael Knight (who plays Tad Martin) and Christopher Knight (Peter Brady) are unrelated. Michael does have two brothers, but neither one is a Christopher.

Q. My husband says Buck Owens and Porter Wagoner are at least 10 years apart in age. I say they are closer. Who's right? — J.B., Conway, Ariz.

A. You are. Owens was born on Aug. 12, 1929, and Wagoner exactly a year later, on Aug. 12, 1930.

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