

Entertainment



The best and worst films in 1990

By DAVID GIAMMARCO

The year of 1990 in film history will probably be best remembered as the year of the sequels and the year of movie budgets gone wild—sometimes one and the same.

We had sequels to films that didn't need them; some we dreaded and some eagerly anticipated. Among them, "Back To The Future III," "The Two Jakes," "Gremlins II," "RoboCop II," "Rocky V," "Predator II," "Another 48 Hours," "Look Who's Talking Too," "Die Hard II," "Godfather III," and "The Gods Must Be Crazy II."

Movie budgets soared in 1990, raising the average film budget of \$10-15 million to upwards of \$25-30 million, with many film tallying up costs at over \$60 million.

Among the high rollers were "Die Hard II" (costs at over \$70 million), "Total Recall" (over \$70 million), "Days of Thunder" (around \$65 million), "Godfather III" (\$60 million) and the list goes on. A lot of the "sure things" failed miserably at the box office despite projected earnings.

The bubble had to burst sooner or later. "Days of Thunder," with Tom Cruise at the wheel, just barely passed its break even point. The mega-hyped "Dick Tracy," which Disney's publicity department carefully patterned after last year's smash "Batman," just made it over the \$100 million mark, a far cry from the anticipat-

ed earnings and the enormous \$300 million take of "Batman" one year previous. A bad sign was the "Dick Tracy" t-shirts and merchandise hitting the discount tables a week before the film even opened.

The following list comprises the best and worst films of the year. Though 1990 was filled with a lot of poor films, most of which made you cringe and wonder how they ever got made, there were also some extraordinary films which restored the magic of Hollywood and the art of the cinema.

TOP FIVE FILMS OF 1990

"Godfather III": Definitely the most powerful, visually striking and engrossing film of the year.

"Godfather III" picks up two decades later and focuses on Michael Corleone's much-desired wish to completely legitimize the family business and bring a closeness back to his loved ones. Well the Mafia doesn't have a retirement plan as Michael soon finds out and so he relinquishes his power over to his nephew, played by Andy Garcia.

"Godfather III" is filmed in operatic proportions—an illustrious, alluring film that's artistically entrancing and will hit you deep in the heart. A brilliantly climactic conclusion to the 'Godfather' trilogy and well worth the 16-year wait. A must-see.

"Goodfellas": Martin Scorsese's sweeping epic tale of three

decades inside a New York mafia family. Unlike "The Godfather," Scorsese presents a gritty, unglamorous view of mob life, opting for a realistic approach to a crime-ridden existence.

The film traces the alliance forged between a half-Irish, half-Sicilian neighborhood kid (Ray Liotta) and his adopted family of mobsters, played by Robert De Niro, Paul Sorvino and Joe Pesci.

The performances are all outstanding, most notably De Niro and Pesci, who breathe such life and death intensity into their characters. The film contains one of the finest ensemble casts ever assembled and the powerful thrust of the crisp, intriguing screenplay makes "Goodfellas" a classic.

Hollywood Beat

By DAVID GIAMMARCO

"Dances With Wolves": Kevin Costner's grand film of life on the Western front during the American Civil War. It's Costner's directorial debut and he does a sensational job, turning in a truly heartfelt film full of intensity and warmth.

Costner plays a lone Union Soldier assigned to the Western frontier, who after living amongst enemy Sioux Indians, ultimately befriends them and becomes their savior, resulting in direct conflict with his infantry.

Clocking in at three hours, "Dances With Wolves" sweeps you up and leaves you oblivious to time. You'll become completely immersed in this character driven story which features Costner's finest performance to date as well as terrific performances by many native actors and it's all wrapped around glorious cinematography. Costner deserves a medal of bravery for this film.

"Awakenings": Penny Marshall, who's made a real name for herself since directing "Big," tackles this "Rainman"esque story starring Robin Williams and Robert De Niro.

Based on the true story of Dr. Oliver Sack's book first published in 1973, Williams plays a neurologist assigned to a large chronic care facility for people with neurological diseases. Some of the patients, practically 'living dead,' were victims of the great sleeping sickness epidemic of the 1920's that left people in limbo for decades at a time.

De Niro plays a forgotten patient asleep for 30 years, aware but unable to move or speak, who miraculously awakens when

Williams gives him an experimental new drug.

De Niro's portrayal is extremely touching, honest and showcases a brilliant range of suffocating emotions trying to creep to the surface. Williams, who has a penchant for getting totally out of control, remains remarkably restrained in his role and proves what a great actor he is once he settles down.

"Edward Scissorhands": The most original and inventive film of this year and a lot of others too. Visionary director Tim Burton ("Pee Wee's Big Adventure," "Beetlejuice," "Batman") spins a tale of fantastic dimensions that is humorous, touching and absolutely dazzling.

Johnny Depp, who gives a startling, sympathetic performance, is Edward, the creation of inventor Vincent Price, whose untimely death leaves Edward stuck with sharp shears of metal for hands. When he tries to adjust to society, he faces a tidal wave of culture shock and then eventual banishment. It's an enchanting and wonderfully crafted fairytale that re-affirms your faith in filmmaking and the ingenious minds (however few) in Hollywood.

FIVE WORST FILMS OF 1990

"Look Who's Talking Too": Perhaps the worst sequel to a movie and definitely the worst film of the year.

The first film, "Look Who's Talking," came out only a year ago and when it started racking up box-office bucks, immediate plans went under way by money grubbing producers for a sequel under the unskilled guise of hack director Amy Heckerling.

The result: A film not even good enough for cable, let alone TV. John Travolta and Kirstie Alley return as the buffoon parents whose kids' minds can be heard by practically everyone within a two-mile radius. Bruce Willis returns as the cocky voice of Mikey and Roseanne Barr is the squawking voice of the newborn Julie.

And it's absolute garbage. Not only were the jokes just barely funny in the first move—which ran out of steam halfway through—but they're all repeated AGAIN and even in a less-funnier fashion if that's at all possible. Not only does the film insult the audience's intelligence, but many scenes are tasteless and frightening to small children.

"Stella": This film, which starred Bette Midler and came out earlier this year, is a remake of the 1947 Barbara Stanwick film which did not need a remake, let alone this.

It tells the story of a small town tramp (Midler, of course) who makes life a living hell for her illegitimate daughter who's utterly embarrassed by every move her mother makes. In a concerted effort to give her daughter a better life, Midler makes a supreme sacrifice and forces her daughter to move away with her wealthy father to have a better life.

Not only is the film overwrought and nauseatingly melodramatic, but Midler—who's the queen of overacting—whines, screeches and makes life hell for the audience too, as well as her daughter. We couldn't help but root for the daughter when she finally gets away from Midler's clutches.

Bad script and even worse acting. Not much to see here.

"Wild Orchid": Probably the poorest excuse for a film. Brought to you by the people behind 1986's "9 1/2 Weeks," "Wild Orchid" is a pale imitation that hopes to capture the style and sensuality of "9 1/2 Weeks" but fails miserably.

It's full of completely awful dialogue and the "acting," especially by lead Carre Otis, is wooden and awkward. Not that they had much to work from storywise because there was no real story. Just inept filmmaking at it's finest. How Mickey Rourke, who incidentally sports a radioactive orange tan for the whole picture, ever got involved with this mess is beyond me.

"Graffiti Bridge": Pinch me, I must be dreaming! Singing ego Prince wrote, directed and starred in this hour and a half music video movie. Need I say more?

"Jacob's Ladder": The script for "Jacob's Ladder" had been floating around Hollywood for over 15 years—nobody knew how to handle the film. And it should have stayed that way.

Unfortunately director Adrian Lyne ("Fatal Attraction") got a hold of the script and decided he could herald a cinematic wonder. Well it turned into a cinematic blunder that left audiences dazed, confused and furious.

Tim Robbins plays a Vietnam Vet who suffers from nightmarish hallucinations that lead him to the brink of a total nervous breakdown. He believes it to be the result of secret chemical tests conducted on him by the military. The audience is led to believe they're visions of hell that Robbins is sinking into.

It's an intriguing concept but it becomes so severely muddled because nobody has a clue what's going on. Lyne, who's terrific at setting up and directing specific scenes, loses his grasp when it comes to the whole film. The film will leave you, besides lost, mostly empty and severely annoyed.

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