

Days of Thunder is like watching a 'Top Gun 2'

Tom Cruise's name is synonymous with monstrous bucks at the box office, so whatever any critic says about one of his films won't make any difference to his legion of movie-going fans.

Days of Thunder, Cruise's latest \$45 million opus, will most certainly emerge as this summer's box office champ, out-moneying even the ultrahyped *Dick Tracy*, *Total Recall* and *Die Hard 2*.

But does that make it a better movie? Well, yes and no.

Hollywood Beat

with DAVID GIAMMARCO

Days of Thunder contains all the elements of a perfect summer flick — great escapism for those hot summer nights.

Cruise plays Cole Trickle, an ambitious race car driver who hooks up with a weasel businessman (played meticulously by Randy Quaid), who in turn pairs up Trickle with legendary NASCAR crew chief Harry Hogge (Robert Duval).

Under wing

Hogge reluctantly takes Trickle under his wing. Between Hogge's skill at building race cars and Trickle's radical racing techniques, they formulate a winning combination that soars to the top of the NASCAR circuit.

And when Trickle smashes his vehicle on the track, his attending

physician (Nicole Kidman) becomes the obligatory Cruise love interest, rounding out the paint by numbers plot.

The plot which, more than once, makes you think you're watching *Top Gun II*.

Everything seems vaguely familiar and for that reason, *Days of Thunder* is a little disappointing.

However, in its own little way, *Days of Thunder* works and mostly due to Cruise's enthusiastic and inseparable devotion to the project from start to finish, having collaborated closely with screenwriter Robert Towne in developing the story.

Robert Duval's solid presence is also a nice touch, bringing extreme vitality to a rather standard character.

Substantial thrills

As well, the racing footage, which could've monotonized the film terribly and been its death, does exactly the opposite.

With its machine-gun style of shooting and editing, it offers substantial thrills to even the least interested person. Expect *Days of Thunder* to do for racing what *Top Gun* did for the Navy.

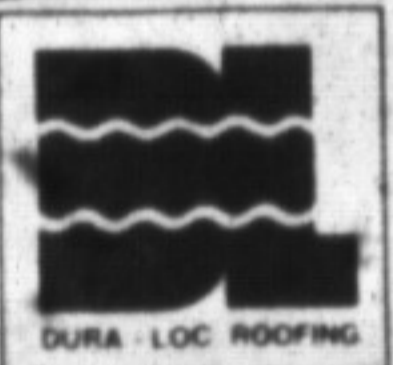
Out of 10, *Days of Thunder* rates a six.



Tom Cruise takes on a familiar role in his new movie, and although it has been panned by some critics, his legions of fans don't care.

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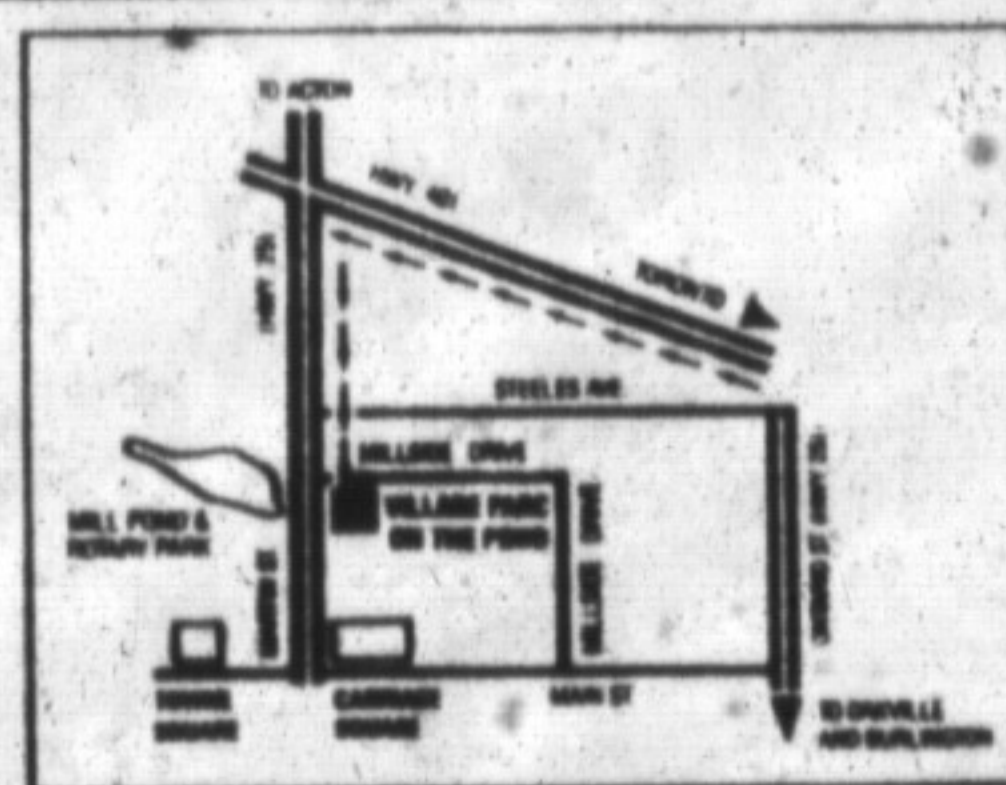
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