

'Urban Cowboy' Travolta rides mechanical bull

Does history repeat itself? Maybe. Do successful movies repeat themselves? You bet. John Travolta's new film, "Urban Cowboy" (PG) is a replay of his box-office smash, "Saturday Night Fever."

The locale has shifted from New York to Houston, the music has changed from disco to country and western. People dress and talk differently, but the key elements — the leading character and the general drift of the story — are the same.

Travolta is Bud Davis, the western counterpart of Tony Manero from "Fever." Bud's a blue collar guy who is just looking for a good time or trying to give his life meaning, the interpretation depends on one's social outlook.

During the day, he works at a petrochemical plant. At night he puts on his cowboy clothes for beer drinking and two-stepping at Gilleys.

GILLEYS, which gets a million dollars worth of free publicity in this flick, is a huge plastic zoo of a place with a bar, dance floor, entertainers and all kinds of goings on.

One of the attractions is a mechanical bucking bull. Bud soon leaves the hoodlums to others as he takes up the challenge of mastering this metal monster. Thus, instead of a dance contest, "Urban Cowboy" features a mechanical bucking-bull contest.

Will Bud win it or will he lose to Wes (Scott Glenn)? Wes is the bad guy. An ex-con out on parole, he beats up on women, including Bud's wife who unwisely succumbed to a yen for "a real cowboy." This is simple stuff, very imitative and a bit tedious. Two hours of bull riding, beer drinking and Texas accents can get wearisome.

However, "Urban Cowboy" does have some major assets to offset these liabilities.

To begin with, there is a terrific soundtrack. You don't have to be a C & W fan to get caught up in the foot-stomping rhythms and heart-throbbing numbers, which include appearances by the Charlie Daniels Band, Mickey Gilley, Bonnie Raitt and Johnny Lee.

THERE ALSO is an exceedingly good cast. Debra Winger as Sissy, Bud's wife, creates an interesting character of some depth. Sometimes assertive, sometimes submissive; sometimes she looks homespun, sometimes seductive.

Scott Glenn makes you cringe as the mean cowboy-convict Wes, and Brooke Alderson and Barry Corbin cut fine roles as Bud's understanding aunt and uncle. Only Maddy Smith fails to be credible as Pam, Bud's uptight girlfriend. However, the problem probably is with the script, which calls for a stereotype, a rich girl out slumming.

Finally, there is the principal asset of the film, Travolta himself. When the camera pans up his long legs to his handsome face and the girls in the audience scream, there's no doubt that this is the actor in the kind of picture his fans want to see.

The temptation to keep playing this character to legions is adoring, ticket-buying fans must be overwhelming. But if Travolta wants to establish himself as a serious actor, he's going to have to show that he can handle some other kind of role.

So, what next, Travolta? If you're offered a script about a working stiff who spends all his free time roller skating, square dancing or skate boarding, will you go into training or will you search for a part that stretches your acting skills as well as your limbs?

what's at the movies

NEW RELEASES

ALL THAT JAZZ (R). Tour de force by writer-director Bob Fosse. Roy Scheider plays hard-driving, fast-living choreographer (Fosse) in behind the scenes story of unusual imagination and energy.

THE BALTIMORE BULLET (PG). Tacky comedy about pool hall hustlers, with James Coburn and Omar Sharif.

BEST BOY (PG). Award-winning, downcast about retarded man who must learn to live apart from his aging parents.

BLACK STALLION (G). Story about a boy and a horse told in rich visual images. Terrific performance by Mickey Rooney as an ex-jockey who befriends the boy.

BRONCO BILLY (PG). Clint Eastwood stars as rowdy, brawling owner of Wild West show.

BRUBAKER (R). Serious drama with Robert Redford as reform warden fighting corruption on state prison farm.

THE CHANGING (R). George C. Scott in haunted house tries to unravel mystery of a child-murder that took place decades ago.

COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER (PG). Sissy Spacek is outstanding as Loretta Lynn in movie bio of country singer's grueling early years and troubled success.

DEATH SHIP (R). Absurd tale of ship killing its passenger and a captain whose dialogue consists of repeating "blood, blood."

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK (PG). "Star Wars" sequel unites original cast in continuation of battle against the evil empire.

FAME (R). Lots of young talent in vibrant musical about students at New York's School of Performing Arts.

FFOLKES (PG). Adventure flick with Roger Moore heading up team of unusual underwater sabotage experts and problem of hijacked oil platform.

FOOLIN' AROUND (PG). The title says it all. Gary Busey is country boy to Annette O'Toole's psychologist/belless.

FRIDAY THE 13TH (R). A case of overkill as counselors reopen camp closed since a series of vicious murders.

GILDA LIVE (R). Funny sketches in strong language from Gilda Radner, includes Father Sarducci's monologues and Radner's Roseanne Roseannadanna.

GORP (R). More summer camp shenanigans in this comedy.

THE HOLLYWOOD KNIGHTS (R). Comedy about young men fighting to save their hangout from the wrecker's ball.

THE ISLAND (R). Butchery galore as Michael Caine investigates ship disappearances and finds modern-day piracy in Caribbean.

KILL OR BE KILLED. Kung Fu action in adventure with James Ryan.

NIGHT GAMES (R). Director Roger Vadim introduces his new find Cindy Pickett in film about sexual maneuvers.

THE NUDE BOMB (PG). Good-hearted try but not enough to sustain interest in this comedy marking film debut of Don Adams as Maxwell Smart, Agent 86.

ROUGH CUT (R). Diamond thief Burt Reynolds falls for Scotland Yard decoy Leslie-Anne Dova.

THE SHINING (R). Stanley Kubrick fashions ultimate horror film where ordinary becomes ominous, and Jack Nicholson's psychotic evokes both fear and laughter.

TOM HORN (R). Steve McQueen in story about rugged men at the end of the Old West era.

WOLLY MOSES (PG). Religious spoof set in Biblical times with Dudley Moore, Lorraine Newman and Richard Pryor.

MOVIE RATING GUIDE

- G General audiences admitted.
- PG Parental guidance suggested. All ages admitted.
- R Restricted. Adult must accompany person under 18.
- X No one under 18 admitted.

Monday, June 23, 1980

(R-6A/CJ7A)

Free summer movies offered by area library

Bloomfield Township Public Library's lineup of free summer movies continues at 6:30 p.m. Thursdays in the Green Room.

June 26 is a must for Hitchcock fans. "Notorious" stars Ingrid Bergman, Cary Grant and Claude Rains. Treason, carrels, atom bombs, spies and the city of Rio de Janeiro add to the suspense. July 10 "The Hunting" (1953) stars Julie Harris, Claire Bloom and Russ Tamblyn. The movie is a great atmospheric study of a monstrous, decaying Victorian mansion that dominates the lives of four people, among them an anthropologist who wants to prove the existence of the supernatural.

JOHN HUSTON's favorite film, "Moby Dick," is slated for July 24. Ray Bradbury wrote the script. Gregory Peck, Richard Basehart and Orson Welles star in this version of Ahab's hunt for the white whale. "Moby Dick" was winner of the N.Y. Film Critics award in 1956.

Aug. 7 features the original "King Kong" starring Fay Wray. Kong's dying falling off the Empire State Building is the stuff of movie legend.

The final film, "Northwest Passage," was winner of the N.Y. Film Critics award in 1956.

Aug. 21, is a study of the early frontier. Spencer Tracy, Robert Young, Ruth Hussey and Walter Brennan lead a guerilla attack during the French-Indian War.

The library is located at 1099 Lone Pine Road in Bloomfield Hills. For information call 642-5800.

Comedy opens at Paradiso

"6 Rms Riv Vu," a Broadway comedy hit by Bob Randall opens June 27 for an eight-week run at the Paradiso Cafe, 17650 Woodward, Detroit.

Performances will be every Saturday night, with dinner at 7 p.m. and show at 8:30. For reservations call 869-

3988. Directed by Edgar A. Guest III of Birmingham, the show stars Barbara Bean and John Powers of Farmington Hills. The show is the Southfield-based Nancy Gurwin Productions 10th dinner theater production.

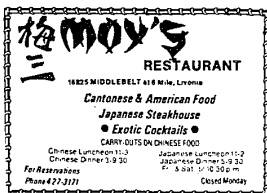


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