

MOVING PICTURES



Griff (Thomas F. Wilson) and his gang hold on to their hover boards over the town square pond in an attempt to catch Marty (Michael J. Fox).

Return trip still entertaining

Once again, friends, it's time to time-warp so rev up your DeLorean and brace yourself for an exciting and delightful trip "Back to the Future Part II" (B+, PG, 90 minutes). In this sequel, Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox) learns from Doctor Emmett Brown (Christopher Lloyd) that, in the year 2015, Marty's kids — Marty Jr. (Michael J. Fox) and sister Marlene (Michael J. Fox) — are in trouble. Unless Marty can intervene and alter things, Marty Jr. will go to jail and a whole string of misadventures will follow.

Marty is whipped forward by Doc to 2015 in order to avert catastrophe. In this future segment Michael J. Fox plays three roles — Marty, Marty Jr. and Marlene — courtesy of the makeup department. Generally that's OK but there tends to be a rubbery, Halloween-mask quality which works against Fox's visual impact.

Marty helps his son by outsmarting the villain, Griff (Thomas F. Wilson), grandson of Biff, circa 1955. This secures the future but while in 2015 Marty gets greedy and purchases a sports almanac listing events from 1950 to 2000.

A chain of events follows spinning Marty back to an alternate track 1985, parallel to the 1985 he had left. Well, now he's in the soup. In the world where Grandpa Biff (Thomas F. Wilson) retrieved the almanac Marty never should have picked up in 2015.

With that booklet back in 1955 Grandpa Biff made a lot of money which leads to a corrupt and depraved Hill Valley in 1985. Unfortunately some of Biff's villainy is a touch too cruel and unpleasant for the film's generally happy atmosphere.

GOT ALL the time travel fans? Well, go see "Back to the Future Part II" because figuring out all these complications is fun. However, be prepared for less than a total experience. Sequels never quite measure up to the expectations created



the movies
Dan Greenberg

by the original's innovative, novel effect. Nonetheless, "Back to the Future Part II" is a very enjoyable, entertaining hour-and-a-half.

STILL PLAYING:
"All Dogs Go To Heaven" (B+, (G) 90 minutes)

Well-known voices back this animated story about Charlie the German Shepherd and Itchy the Dachshund.

"Batman" (C+, (PG-13) 120 minutes)

Michael Keaton is a dud in the title role but Jack Nicholson's Joker is terrific.

"The Bear" (D-) (R) 120 minutes.

Excellent nature photography but film often lacks continuity and gets pretty sappy at times.

"Black Rain" (D-) (R) 120 minutes.

Dynastic, trite detective story stars Michael Douglas.

"Companion" (F) (R).

Whitley Strieber's tale of being grabbed by aliens.

"Crimes and Misdemeanors" (A+) (PG-13) 100 minutes.

Woody Allen at his best in this romantic comedy about family life with all its joy and sadness.

"Dad" (B) (PG) 119 minutes.

Excellent acting by Jack Lemmon, Ted Danson, Zakes Mokae and Olympia Dukakis married by clichés.

"Drugstore Cowboy" (Z) (R) 100 minutes.

As fun as unpleasant as it gets. Four young folks steal and use drugs.

"The Fabulous Baker Boys" (R).

Grading the movies

A+	Top marks - sure to please
A	Close behind - excellent
A-	Still in running for top honors
B+	Pretty good stuff, not perfect
B	Good
B-	Good but notable deficiencies
C+	Just a cut above average
C	Mediocre
C-	Not so hot and slipping fast
D+	The very best of the poor stuff
D	Poor
D-	It doesn't get much worse
F	Truly awful
Z	Reserved for the cotsofally bad
*	No advanced screening

Two brothers — Jeff and Beau Bridges — add Michelle Pfeiffer for their cocktail lounge piano playing act.

"Gross Anatomy" (C-) (PG-13) 105 minutes.

Blat, slow, weakly structured romantic comedy about five, first-year med students.

"Harlem Nights" (D) (R) 110 minutes.

Nice cars and nifty suits but all that comic talent — Eddie Murphy, Richard Pryor, Red Fox, Arsenio Hall and Della Reese — can't save this slow-paced 1930s Harlem gangster story.

"Immediate Family" (B+) (PG-13) 95 minutes.

Childless couple adopting baby from young mother and her boyfriend who love, but cannot afford, the baby.

"The Little Mermaid" (A) (G) 80 minutes

Disney animation of Hans Christian Andersen tale of mermaid in love with human.

"Look Who's Talking" (C+) (PG-13) 97 minutes.

Contrived, poorly structured story of pregnant CPA (Kirstie Alley) and her search for a perfect father for her baby. Bruce Willis is the baby's voice.

"Parenthood" (A-) (R) 120 minutes.

Large, talented cast in complex but entertaining story about a family that includes James Robards, Steve Martin, Tom Hulce, Martha Plimpton and Diane West, among others.

"Phantom of the Opera" (F) (R).

Freddy (Robert Englund) is back newly disguised in an old story.

"Prancer" (G)

Delightful story of nine-year-old girl who finds an injured reindeer just before Christmas.

"Second Sight" (F) (PG).

Detective with psychic and partner save kidnapped cardinal.

"Sex, Lies, and Videotape" (R).

Everyone's talking about this romantic comedy with James Spader.

"Shoemaker" (R) 107 minutes.

Wes Craven does it again, this time in the world of electronic video mayhem.

"Staying Together" (A) (R) 95 minutes.

Warm, sensitive tale of three sons on their own when dad sells the family business.

"Steel Magnolias" (B-) (PG) 110 minutes.

Talented cast led by Shirley MaClain's performance falls short in depicting problems of six Southern women.

"Stepfather 2" (F) (R).

And you all thought Halloween was last month.

"When Harry Met Sally" (A+) (R) 90 minutes.

ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

A pair of musicals with unusual twists

By John Monaghan
special writer

It's easy to look at movie musicals as mindless entertainment whose sole purpose is to make people hum the soundtrack on their way home. In a week brimming with musical screenings, two of the titles, "Love Me or Leave Me" (1955) and "Cabin in the Sky" (1943), have that same end result. But — as their troubled characters can attest — it's a long, hard road getting there.

Take Ruth Etting, the subject of "Love Me or Leave Me," screening Tuesday morning at Livonia Mall. The famous 1930s torch singer was as well known for her lousy marriage to a gangster as for the songs she made popular.

In adapting her story for the screen, Oscar-winning Daniel Fuchs didn't pull any punches. The end result was perhaps the most disturbing and honest show biz biography of the 1950s.

DORIS DAY played Etting, the talented chorus girl whose career flourished under the financial support of gangster Martin "The Gimp" Snyder (James Cagney). Forced into marriage, Etting fell in love with another man — whom Snyder tried to murder out of jealousy.

The chemistry was unusual — to say the least. Cagney, well known for gangster roles, elicited both sympathy and revulsion as the psychopomically Jealous Snyder. The role echoed slightly more subtly than his intense mother fixation in "White Heat" (1949).

Day, meanwhile, surprised everyone with her dramatic performance. She did justice to the renditions of Etting classics — "Ten Cents a Dance" and "Shaking the Blues Away" — along with a pair of

songs written especially for the film. "Love Me or Leave Me" was well received by critics and audiences and could have turned Day into a major dramatic actress. Fuchs released the film "The Dawn of a New Day."

Though she worked with Hitchcock on "The Man Who Knew Too Much" the following year, Day soon returned to the squeaky-clean roles that made her famous.

THE DARK aspects of "Cabin in the Sky," meanwhile, spread well beyond its all-black cast. In it, the forces of good and evil wrestle for the soul of a likeable no-account named Little Joe (Eddie "Rochester" Anderson).

In the world of "Cabin in the Sky," jazz music becomes synonymous with sin. Louis Armstrong is all smiles as an assistant to Lucifer Jr. (Rex Ingram), and Duke Ellington struts at the local den of iniquity.

"Cabin in the Sky" was based on a popular Broadway play, and was the first of many musicals directed by Vincente Minnelli. Despite the obvious racial stereotypes, a black cast has rarely been used so creatively.

The film sets up familiar good girl and bad girl counterparts in Ethel Waters and Lena Horne. As Little Joe's faithful wife, Waters comes off surprisingly sexy when vamping it up in an attempt to make her husband jealous. She introduced the song, "Taking a Chance on Love."

Ageless Horne, meanwhile, is at her most striking in this film. She puts on sin with the same ease of slipping into a sexy silk blouse.

"Cabin in the Sky" teams with "Singin' in the Rain" (1952) this weekend as the Tele-Arts Theatre takes a break from premieres with a monthlong look at vintage films.

SCREEN SCENE

CINEMA GUILD, various locations on the University of Michigan campus, Ann Arbor, 994-0027.

"Le Plaisir" (France - 1957), 7 p.m. Dec. 3, in Lorch Hall, 909 Monroe. Max Ophuls adapts three Guy De Maupassant stories for the screen, with a cast including Jean Gabin and Simone Simon. A Film and Video Studies presentation. (Free admission this film only.)

DETROIT FILM THEATRE, Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave. Detroit. Call 832-2730 for information. (R).

"La Lectrice" (France - 1988), 7:30 p.m. Dec. 1; 9:30 p.m. Dec. 2.

In this quirky French comedy, a book-loving young woman takes a job reading to clients for cash. Starring Miosha-Mati.

"Kiss Me, Stupid" (USA - 1964), 5:15 p.m. Dec. 3. Billy Wilder directed this much-maligned, often hilarious sex comedy with Kim Novak, Ray Winstone, and Dean Martin as a sleazy lounge singer named "Dino."

In CinemaScope.

HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY, 16301 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. Call 943-23300 for information. (Free).

"Inspect General" (USA - 1949), 7 p.m. Nov. 27. Popular comedy about a young goofball (Danny Kaye) who impersonates an ambassador to an Eastern European country.

LIVONIA MALL CINEMA, 29415 Seven Mile, Livonia. Call 476-1166 for information. (Free).

"Love Me or Leave Me" (USA - 1955), 10 a.m. Nov. 28. Doris Day as entertainer Ruth Etting, bonded by her psychopathic gangster boyfriend (James Cagney). Edgy drama with

great music ("Shaking the Blues Away," "Ten Cents a Dance.") Shown in CinemaScope.

MICHIGAN THEATRE, 16301 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. For information, call 669-8397. (\$4 regular and \$3.25 students and senior citizens)

"A Taming Woman's Return" (Japan - 1988), Nov. 23 to Dec. 3 (call for showtimes). Juzo Itami's popular heroine returns, making life miserable for shifty las evaders.

"Mary Poppins" (USA - 1964), 1:4, 6:30 p.m. Dec. 2-3. The anniversary re-release of the Disney chestnut. Julie Andrews in her film debut as the "practically perfect" nanny.

With dancing penguins, "Chim-Chim-Cheree" and an especially rubber-legged Dick Van Dyke.

"The Man Who Would Be King" (USA - 1975), 7 p.m. Nov. 29. John Huston directed this epic adventure, with Sean Connery and Michael Caine as mercenary soldiers established as royalty among the desert tribes of Kalifornia. A real treat on the big screen.

"White Christmas" (USA - 1954) Nov. 30 to Dec. 3 (see for show times). Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye star in the overrated Christmas classic, which has little going for it except Irving Berlin's lifting title song.

REDFORD THEATRE, 17360 Lahser, Detroit, 537-2560. (R2)

"Shall We Dance?" (USA - 1937), 8 p.m. Dec. 1-2. Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers teamed again in this classic musical. There's a cleverly stage roller skating sequence and unforgettable songs by George and Ira Gershwin. Amos Vogel: "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off." "They Can't Take That Away From Me" and the title number.

VIDEO VIEWING

Foreign films that deserve a VCR visa

By Dan Greenberg
special writer

Foreign film fans — as well as those who seldom make tape offerings in that section of the video store — may be interested in the wide variety of entertaining movies available on overseas.

A student once asked me, in all sincerity, whether or not there was some requirement that all foreign films must have sad endings.

While there is no such rule, most imported films are more serious than Hollywood entertainment. There are a number of reasons for that, but what we see here does not fully represent foreign film production.

Their reputation to the contrary, not all imported movies are serious, artistic, philosophical or exclusively concerned with social problems.

Despite a high entertainment quotient, foreign films, particularly

Two very excellent, older German films which launched their stars' careers — "M" with Peter Lorre and "The Blue Angel" with Marlene Dietrich — always are available and are a must for every film fan.

Western European ones, are produced in cultures with long traditions of open discussion of social issues. There also is a strong tradition of the motion picture as an art form in Europe.

Then, too, there is the high cost of distribution and exhibition so that distributors are reluctant to spend

big bucks without some sort of publicity hook to reassure them that the film will appeal to the American market. "Best of the Festival" at Venice or Cannes or "The Golden Something Somewhere Else" are usually awards won for artistic merit and quality as the needed boost for ticket sales.

Of course nowadays videocassette distribution eases the financial burden on importing foreign films to this country. The extensive racks at many video stores are ample testimony to this and there's lots of entertainment available, now and old.

TWO VERY excellent, older German films which launched their stars' careers — "M" with Peter Lorre and "The Blue Angel" with Marlene Dietrich — always are available and are a must for every film fan. The former is about a psychopath (Lorre) whose killings set Berlin on edge and concludes with

Lorre's memorably, tortured confession.

"The Blue Angel" features Marlene Dietrich introducing "Falling in Love Again" which became her signature tune. Rene Clair directed the first French musical in 1931, "Le Million," a dippy but fun-filled romp through Paris in musical search for the winning lottery ticket.

Recently a number of French films have been remade quite successfully in this country, e.g., Ted Danson in "Cousins," and Danson with Tom Selleck in "Three Men and a Cradle." A few years ago Gene Wilder and Glinda Radner remade the 1977 French comedy, "Pardon Mon Affaire" (color, PG, 105 minutes).

"Affaire" was directed by Yves Robert, better known for "The Tall Blonde Man with One Black Shoe" — also remade on this side of the Atlantic and also available in its original on tape.

Language is one of the problems foreign films face in this country and while dubbing is disturbing on large theater screens, it's not so intrusive on a 21-inch videocassette, despite the fact that it never quite matches up and there's always the sense that some strangers are butting in on the fun.

"Pardon Mon Affaire" is dubbed and it's a pretty effective comedy about four friends and their problems with sexuality and aging. Despite that topic, the film is properly rated PG. All very tasteful as the comedy centers less on the sexual problems of middle-aged men and more on their bumbling attempts to do something about it.

THE MAIN character, Etienne Dorsay (Jean Rochefort), a minor but successful civil-servant, is happily married to Marlene (Danielle Deleyme) but the middle-aged crazies

get him as they always have his philandering friend, Bouly (Victor Lamouisse), who is distrustful when she returns.

Simon (Guy Béccas) is a doctor suffering from an overdose of mother while the macho guy in the group, Daniel (Claude Brasseur), is a homosexual. The childishness of these supposedly mature characters provides a number of good comic interludes although the film's main focus is on Etienne's bumbling attempts to have an affair with a model (Anny Duperey).

While all that is going on his wife is being pursued by Lucien, a classmate of their daughter, a totally humorless, young pseudo-intellectual. His is a very funny characterization and a clever comment on the middle-class traumas that populate this entertainment.