



Girl's longing for a pet leads to 'Monkey Trouble'



Eva Gregory (Thora Birch) really wants a pet. And Eva's parents really don't. To them, paws and fur aren't part of the family. Mom (Mimi Rogers) believes her nine-year-old daughter can't keep her room clean, much less care for a pet. Her stepfather (Christopher McDonald) says no because he's hyper-allergic to animal hair. Still, despite all the objections and excuses, Eva just can't live without a pet. And neither can Shorty Kohn (Harvey Keitel) in "Monkey Trouble," opening Friday at metro Detroit movie theaters.

Shorty, a two-bit hustler, has made quite a Fugate-style living over the years by training a capuchin monkey to entertain and "lift" the crowds along the Boardwalk at Venice Beach. Trained to relieve admirers of their wallets and jewelry without their knowledge, the monkey also burglarizes homes.

Now, a couple of uptown crooks want Shorty to put the monkey's

felonious skills to work in a heist that could land them all on easy street.

But Shorty has a problem. He's abused his pet a little too much and his monkey is on the run. Desperate, he sets out to find his missing link at any cost in a small capuchin that suddenly leaps from a tree. Captivated by the creature's comical antics, she decides to claim him as her own.

As their bond develops, Eva quickly learns that caring for her new friend, whom she names Dodger, is not going to be as easy as she first thought. He goes to the bathroom on the floor, is hard to control, and he's a pain to hide from her friends and her unsuspecting parents.

In the ensuing days, Eva discovers Dodger's dubious talents and attempts to break him from his life of crime. Just as she starts to make progress, she gets blamed for his pocket-picking.

Caught in a growing web of deceit, Eva finds it difficult to deal with her own dishonesty, and she must find a way to set things

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straight before her monkey business is exposed. But Shorty is onto her and he wants his meal-ticket back.

Writer/director Franco Amurri says his daughter, also named Eva, was the inspiration behind "Monkey Trouble." "She wanted a dog so badly," recalls the director. "And the key issue in our house became whether an eight-year-old could be responsible enough to care for a pet."

A father's love was Amurri's primary motivation for making the film. "I wanted to tell a story based on my own experiences and observations of my daughter's world," he said.

"If I was going to dedicate two or three years to a project, I wanted to make a film my daughter wouldn't have to wait 10 years to see. In the end, I wanted to make a film that families can enjoy together."

Although in real life, Amurri's daughter's longed for a dog as a

pet, when developing the story for the screen, the writer/director felt "a monkey would present more interesting possibilities than a dog or a cat."

That one change would eventually translate into enormous challenges for the filmmakers, and resulted in a pre-production period of almost a year and a half.

During that time, an elaborate search was conducted to find a specific type of capuchin monkey to star as Dodger, who is in virtually every scene in the film. The search was complicated by the fact that although there are some 30 sub-species of capuchins, none had ever been trained to appear in a film.

In addition to teaching Dodger the rudiments of screen acting, his trainers were faced with the challenges of having him, run, retrieve, climb trees, perform tricks on the back of a moving bicycle and hang from a flying kite, all on the director's cue.

A New Line release, "Monkey Trouble" is rated PG. (Some material may not be suitable for pre-teens).



Monkey business: Eva (Thora Birch) and her new best friend Dodger, a pocket-picking monkey in "Monkey Trouble" a family comedy.

Frank Drebin returns to work in 'Naked Gun' sequel

Frank Drebin is back — with all-new adventures, all-new dialogue and many new costumes in "Naked Gun 33½" opening Friday at metro Detroit movie theaters.

The second sequel to the original smash hit finds now-retired Lt. Frank Drebin going undercover after discovering a terrorist plot.

Leslie Nelson stars in "Naked Gun 33½: The Final Insult" with Priscilla Presley, George Kennedy and O.J. Simpson, all of whom are repeating their roles from "The Naked Gun" and "The Naked Gun 2½." Also starring is Fred Ward. The cast includes Anna Nicole Smith, Kathleen Freeman and Ellen Greene.

Directed by Peter Segal from a screenplay by Pat Proft, David Zucker and Robert LoCash, the film is a Paramount Pictures release and rated PG-13 (Parents

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are strongly cautioned to give special guidance for attendance of children younger than 13). It was produced by Robert K. Weiss and David Zucker.

The film, a moving account of a man's search for destiny, is punctuated by the usual pratfalls. On a far deeper level, the introverted, now-retired police Lt. Frank Drebin is drawn undercover after coming upon an unconscionable terrorist plot — all the while trying to ignite the hot-burning embers with his new wife, Jane Spencer-Drebin.

"The success of the 'Naked Gun' movies is pretty remarkable when you remember they're based on a TV program that was canceled after only six episodes," said co-writer and producer David Zucker.

The challenge is in making a third movie of a series is always how to retain the elements that audiences love so much while moving the film into new arenas.

"That's why I decided to shoot the film in a dark, French Impressionistic style," said director Peter Segal. "I wanted to bring that soft, fuzzy look to the screen."

Back in town, again recreating his starring role as Lt. Frank Drebin, is Leslie Nielsen. Priscilla Presley, once again appears in the film as Jane, O.J. Simpson as the ever-hapless Nordberg, and George Kennedy as the venerable Capt. Ed Hoeken.

"I'm very comfortable being in a movie that's as silly and stupid as 'The Naked Gun,' said Kennedy. "Don't forget, I made something like 47 'Airport' movies. If I could survive that, I can survive this. Not everything is art you know."



Hostage: Lt. Frank Drebin (Leslie Nielsen) takes hostage his own wife, Jane Spencer-Drebin (Priscilla Presley), while attempting to thwart an unconscionable terrorist plot in "Naked Gun 33½."

UPCOMING MOVIES

There's something for everyone at the movies. Here's a list of what's in the wings:

Opening Wednesday, March 23:

■ "Above the Rim" — An urban drama about a promising high school basketball player who must choose between two people vying for his talents.

Opening Friday, March 25:

■ "The Paper" — A compelling drama about an editor of a big city newspaper and the hot story that could expose a major scandal — if he can meet his deadline.

Stars Michael Keaton, Glenn Close, Robert Duvall, Maria To-

mei, and Randy Quaid.

Opening Wednesday, March 30:

■ "Four Weddings And A Funeral" — A stylish romantic comedy set exclusively at four weddings and a funeral, is a tale of 8 friends and 2 people who belong together but insist on staying apart. Stars Andie MacDowell, Hugh Grant, Kristin Scott Thomas, and Simon Callow.

■ "Thumbelina" — Animated feature based on the beloved Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale about a tiny girl "no bigger than your thumb," and her adventures as she follows her heart.

■ "Major League II" — The ex-champion Cleveland Indians are headed for a fast paced finish again thanks to their off season meanderings, and they must prove once more that they have what it takes, as they are coached by their former catcher, Jake Taylor. Stars Charlie Sheen, Tom Berenger, Corbin Bernsen and Randy Quaid.

■ "Jimmy Hollywood" — Street-smart comedy about a would-be actor who takes a vigilante philosophy after a series of robberies, crossing the role of a lifetime.

Opening Friday, April 1:

■ "House of the Spirits" — Saga

of the powerful Trueba family, followed over the course of three generations. Stars Jeremy Irons, Meryl Streep, Glenn Close and Winona Ryder. Based on bestselling novel of the same name.

Opening Friday, April 8:

■ "Threesome" — Two guys and a girl, college roommates through an administrative error, find their relationship evolving into a complex triangle in this contemporary comedy.

■ "With Honors" — True story of Harvard University students who befriend a homeless man. Stars Joe Pesci.

Organ concert features music from silent films

Organist Lee Erwin, heard by millions of Americans on the Moon River program on the NBC radio network, and as organist, composer and arranger for the various Arthur Godfrey shows on CBS, will perform some of his original silent film scores at the Mighty Wurliizer pipe organ at the Senate Theater, 6424 Michigan Ave., west of Livernois, in Detroit, on Saturday, March 19, at 7 p.m.

Erwin began accompanying silent films in the 1920s and

since has composed and performed brand new scores for over 70 of Hollywood's masterpieces from the silent era. He has played on virtually every soap opera originating in New York City.

The concert is presented by the Detroit Theater Organ Society which offers monthly programs on the former Fisher Theater pipe organ. Tickets are \$10 at the door. For information call 894-4100.

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