

LET'S GO! MOVIES

Wesley Snipes flies high in 'Drop Zone' action

TICKETS PLEASE



JOHN MONAGHAN

"We kind of slithered past the producers and directors," said Snipes, who was in New York City promoting the film in November. "When everyone said, 'That's a wrap,' one car went one way and the other went toward the plane."

As a result, Snipes, who had never jumped before, appears in scenes usually handled by a stuntman. While viewing the rushes, the producers marvelled at how close the stand-in looked to the movie's star.

"Drop Zone," which opens nationwide Friday, is about stunt skydivers who parachute onto government buildings to steal classified computer information. Once finished, they simply parachute off the roof to a waiting truck below.

Snipes plays a U.S. marshal who loses a brother to the thugs. He enlists the help of Jessie (Yancy Butler), who runs her own skydiving school and has a personal axe to grind with the team's evil leader (Gary Busey).

"In 'Passenger 57,' my character was a vigilante type out to get the bad guy if it's the last thing he did," said Snipes. "This guy, he's kind of plunged into the situation, an everyday man who finds himself in extreme circumstances."

Veteran director John Badham prides the movie's realistic depiction of the skydiving subculture. "Whether it's discs in 'Saturday Night Fever' or computers in 'War Games,' I've examined these cultures. I knew absolutely nothing about it," he said. "I think that whole feeling of discovery translates to many of my movies."

The producers of "Drop Zone" hired some of the country's most talented skydivers, many who travel like gypsies in trailers living for the next jump. The drop zones where they meet and perform stunts are always dangerous and rarely within the law.

Snipes quickly discovered the attraction of skydiving. "That's the great thing about acting — You get to live different lives," he

said, "to do something you never would have done on your own; working with the best, so that your level of safety goes up... It's not like Billy Bob's sky diving."

"Drop Zone" is entertaining, Snipes says, though he finds straight dramatic roles "much more gratifying." This isn't surprising for the popular actor, who has chosen his parts carefully ever since making a splash with "New Jack City" in 1990.

He recently battled Sylvester Stallone in "Demolition Man," then made the low-profile "Sugar Hill." He will soon star as a drag queen in "To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar," an offbeat project to say the least.

Snipes hinted that things weren't all that rosy on the set of "Wong Foo" or with its young director. "You have to crawl before you walk," he advised. "Show some respect. Show some compassion. You're working with actors and technicians who have more experience than you."

He fine-tunes his technical knowledge, hoping to direct someday. He may soon play jazz legend Miles Davis, which he doesn't want to turn into "a movie about a drug addict," though he would like to address "why so many of our geniuses have been so self-destructive."



BRUCE W. TALAMON

Thriller: U.S. Marshal Pete Nessim (Wesley Snipes) and Jessie Crossman (Yancy Butler) track down a skydiver for their exhibition skydiving team in "Drop Zone."

What attracts him to movies like "Drop Zone?" "For an action film, it's the hook," he said. "Here it's people jumping out of planes... It's scary to me in real life so I

can make it seem scary on the screen."

If you have a comment for John Monaghan, call him at 953-2047.

mailbox 1866, on a Touch-Tone phone, or write to him care of Street Scene, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150.

Screen Scene

A sampling of what's playing at alternative movie theaters across metro Detroit as reviewed by John Monaghan.

MAIN ART THEATRE
118 N. Main Street at 11 Mile, Royal Oak. Films play through at least Thursday, unless noted otherwise. Call 810-542-0180 for information and showtimes. (\$6.50; \$4 students and matinee; \$3 twilight).

"The Last Seduction" (USA - 1994). The follow-up film noir from John Dahl, director of "Red Rock West." This time Linda Fiorentino stars as a ruthless

femme fatale who double crosses her husband.

"Interview with the Vampire" (USA - 1994). Neil Jordan's stunning new film version of the Anne Rice vampire novel features seductive performances from Brad Pitt, Tom Cruise, and newcomer Kirsten Dunst.

"Bullets Over Broadway" (USA - 1994). Woody Allen's latest, set in the 1920s, finds an ambitious playwright (John Cusack) offered the chance to direct his own play. The only hitch: he has to cast a mobster's girlfriend in a key role.

"Heavenly Creatures" (New Zealand - 1994). Opens Friday. The tale, based on a true story about two imaginative girls who find themselves mixed up in murder.

An acclaimed new movie from Peter Jackson, the director of "Dead Alive."

MAPLE THEATRE
4135 W. Maple, Bloomfield. All titles play through at least next Thursday. Call 810-855-9090 for information. (\$6; \$2.95 twilight).
"The Professional" (USA - 1994). The new thriller from Luc Besson ("La Femme Nikita") finds a hitman taking a young girl

under his protection. Gary Oldman stars.

"Interview with the Vampire" (USA - 1994). See Main Art Theatre listing above.

"The Shawshank Redemption" (USA - 1994). Tim Robbins and Morgan Freeman play prison inmates whose terms span the decades. An entertaining, if clichéd, adaptation of a Steven King story.

MICHIGAN THEATRE
603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Call 313-668-8397 for information. (\$5; \$4 students/seniors).
John Woo double feature — A

Better Tomorrow (Hong Kong - 1995) at 7:15 p.m. and "Hard Boiled" (Hong Kong - 1992) at 9 p.m., Dec. 12-13. Two films by Hong Kong action master John Woo. The first is a rousing melodrama about an aging gangster torn apart by loyalty to his rookie cop brother and his lifelong pal, a swaggering hitman. The second,

"Hard Boiled," climaxes with an epic shootout in a hospital that both funny and ultra-violent.

STATE THEATRE
2115 Woodward, Detroit. Call 961-5450 for information. (\$10; \$6 students/seniors).
"The Mask" (USA - 1994). A p.m. Dec. 12. Jim Carrey plays a wearily clerk who dons and ancient mask and becomes a biza superhero.

Tell us about your fashion blunders

Everyone's done it — made a fashion faux pas, a blunder that they're embarrassed to admit. Send us a picture of your worst fashion faux pas, or just write about it, to win a prize in our giveaway for "Ready to Wear (Pret-A-Porter)," a new fashion comedy opening at metro Detroit movie theaters on Dec. 25.

The grand prize winner will receive a gift certificate for a pair of fashion books from a New York

designer. Three runners-up will receive a one year subscription to "Elle" magazine.

Get out your photo albums, and start looking for those pictures. The first 25 readers to respond to our contest will receive a pass for two to the opening premiere of "Ready to Wear" at a local movie theater the week of Dec. 19. If you would like your photo returned to you please send along a self-ad-

designed, stamped envelope.

Deadline for entries is Monday, Dec. 12.

Send or fax entries to: Keely Wygonik, Let's Go! editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc., 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. Fax entries by calling: (313) 591-7279. For information, call (313) 953-2105.

Every year in Paris, the fashion industry's top designers and su-

permodels stage the world's most exciting fashion show. It's called the "Pret-A-Porter," and it means "Ready to Wear." This holiday season, Robert Altman invites movie lovers and fashion groups everywhere to join the party along with an all-star cast including, Sophie Loren, Marcello Mastroianni, Julie Roberts, Tim Robbins, Kim Basinger, Lauren Bacall, Lyle Lovett, Tracey Ullman, Stephen Rea and Forest Whitaker.

'Pagemaster' winner likes Willy Wonka story

Keith Shelton, 11, of West Bloomfield is the winner of our "Pagemaster" contest. Shelton wrote about his favorite book "Willy Wonka & the Great Glass Elevator." His prize is an autographed copy of "The Pagemaster" written by David Kitzner.

Here are excerpts from his winning essay.

My favorite book is "Willy Wonka & the Great Glass Elevator," by Roald Dahl. It is my favorite book because it is a sequel to "Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory." It is very adventurous and kept me reading.

I liked the story because it was very funny and had some very

wierd villains called Vermicious Knids, which are shapeshifters! I liked the characters because they were also very funny. I liked Mr. Wonka because he had all kinds of crazy ideas like landing on the space station, inventing a pill that would make you smaller for example if you were 90 years old such as Grandpa George and

Grandma Georgina and took 2 or 3 pills you would be a kid again! "The Pagemaster," now playing at metro Detroit movie theaters, tells the story of a young boy who takes refuge from a storm in an empty library. He is sent on an amazing journey by the Pagemaster, keeper of the books and guardian of the written word.



Comedy: Lloyd Christmas (Jim Carrey, left) and Harry Dunn (Jeff Daniels) are dressed to kill at the swanki Snow Owl Ball in New Line Cinema's comedy, "Dumb and Dumber." Benefit premiere at the Fox Theatre, 7:30 p.m. Monday, Dec. 12. Tickets, \$15, call (810) 645-6666.

THE HOT-BUTTON DATE MOVIE OF THE YEAR!

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Coming Attractions

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

Opening Friday, Dec. 9

- "Disclosure" — A high-tech story of corporate intrigue and sexual harassment, based on the novel by Michael Crichton. Stars Michael Douglas, Demi Moore and Donald Sutherland.
- Opening Friday, Dec. 16
- "Speechless" — Romantic comedy based on the real-life relationship of Clinton Bush campaign planners, James Carville and Mary Mallin, speech writers on opposite sides of a campaign who wage an election battle while romance grows. Stars Geena Davis, Michael Keaton, Christopher Reeve and Bonnie Bedelia.
- "Dumb & Dumber" — Comedy about the misadventures of two incredibly stupid guys on a cross-country trip trying to return a

suitcase of money to its owner. Stars Jim Carrey, Jeff Daniels, Lauren Holly, Karen "Duff" Duff, and Teri Garr.

Opening Friday, Dec. 21

- "Richie Rich" — Based on the Harvey Comics series, the story of a boy who has everything and takes over the family business when his parents are believed lost in a plane crash. With Macaulay Culkin and John Larroquette.
- "Mixed Nuts" — A Christmas comedy for the '90s about a group of people at a suicide hotline on Christmas Eve, dealing with love, birth, death and fruitcakes. Stars Steve Martin and Madeline Kahn.
- Opening Friday, Dec. 23
- "Neil" — A woman raised in a remote cabin in the wilds, becomes a source of wisdom and inspiration to the doctor and psychologist who control her fate.