

MOVING PICTURES

'Boyz' gets a bad rap

By John Monaghan
special writer

From all the negative press, "Boyz n the Hood" must be a virtual bloodbath of glorified gang violence backed by a booming rap music score.

That couldn't be farther from the truth. Although drive-by shootings and crack cocaine are always lurking evils, "Boyz n the Hood" is a compelling story of friendship set among the mean streets of Los Angeles.

When 10-year-old Tre (Cuba Gooding, Jr.) arrives to live with his father, he already knows most of the neighborhood kids and the rules of the house. He has spent weekends there and now his divorced father, Furious Styles (Larry Fishburne), has taken full custody.

"You wanna see a dead body?" one of the kids casually asks Tre. They walk along the railroad tracks to an especially bombed out section of the city. In a field lies the body of a gunshot victim, stinking to high heaven and probably not going anywhere soon.

In Tre's neighborhood, houses are left unpainted and Armor Guard lines the first-floor windows. Crossing the street sometimes means having a gun stuck in your face from the window of a passing car. Helicopter searchlights flood the interiors of houses at night.

AFTER WHILE, "Boyz n the Hood" resembles a prison movie, which of course it is. Still, there aren't drawn-out speeches about getting out of the city. According to father Furious, blacks should remain



Cuba Gooding Jr. (from left), Larry Fishburne and rap recording artist Ice Cube star in "Boyz n the Hood," a drama about coming

of age in black urban America and street life where friendship, pain, danger and love combine to form reality.

the rock," sometimes for sex, and talking nonstop about everything and nothing. Director John Singleton definitely talks the talk, even if you can only decipher half of the dialogue. He also fills "Boyz n the Hood" with clever visual touches. Early on, a burglar enters the house while Tre and Furious sleep. The relentless drip of a rusty faucet,

shown in closeup, creates a dream-like tension as the father removes the Magnum from beneath his bed. L.A. POLICE brutality also rears its very topical head, this time in the form of a black police officer who enjoys terrorizing fellow blacks. "Anything wrong?" the cop asks Furious, hoping to intimidate him. "Yeah, brother, but unfortunately you don't know what it is."

At only 23, director Singleton has a lot of answers. Where "Do the Right Thing" Spike Lee offers problems and lets an audience debate the solutions, this director knows exactly what he wants to say. Unfortunately, Columbia Pictures, which has released the film, has obscured that message with misleading advertising that only plays up the violence. Word of mouth will hopefully remove the "Boyz" bad rap.

SCREEN SCENE

CRANBROOK ACADEMY OF ART MUSEUM, DeSille Auditorium, 500 Lone Pine Road, Bloomfield Hills. Call 645-3223 for information. (\$2.50 museum admission for adults, \$1.50 students and seniors). Artist profiles. 2 p.m. July 26, 28. "Franz Kline Remembered," "Arshile Gorky," and "In Search of Rothko," all made in 1982, appear together on videotape.

FOX THEATRE, 2211 Woodward, Detroit. Call 567-600 for information. (\$10) "Spartacus" (USA - 1961), 7:30 p.m. July 23-26 and 2 and 7:30 p.m. July 27-28. Stanley Kubrick's epic about a slave who said no is much better than anyone remembered. Kirk Douglas plays the title role with typical square-jawed conviction, while Laurence Olivier and Tony Curtis (especially in their steamy scene in a Roman bath) have their characters fleshed out considerably through added re-release footage. A real feast for the eyes, shown here in 70mm.

HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY, 13671 Michigan Avenue, Dearborn. Call 943-2330 for information. (free) Abbott and Costello Night, 7 p.m. July 22. The popular comedy team from the '40s and '50s star in several short television skits, including "Vacuum Cleaner Salesman" (1954) and "Dentist's Office" (1954).

LIVONIA MALL, Seven Mile and Middlebelt Roads, Livonia. Call 476-1166 for information. (free) "Beast From Hollow Mountain" (USA/Mexico - 1956), 10 a.m. July 23. In a concept originally concocted by "King Kong's" Willis O'Brien, cowboys battle dinosaurs with laughable results. As part of the mall's month-long tribute to science fiction films.

MAGIC BAG THEATRE CAFE, 22918 Woodward, Ferndale. Call 540-0660 for information. (\$4) "The Wild One" (USA - 1956), 8 p.m. July 23. Motorcycle-riding Marlon Brando roars into town with his gang and starts terrorizing the locals. A genuine '50s classic, featuring Lee Marvin as rival gang leader. As part of a series titled "Personal Favorites," hosted by WDET disc jockey Dave Dixon.

MAPLE THEATRE, 4135 W Maple, Birmingham. (46) \$3.50

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'Q & A' leaves a lot to be desired

A man runs up the stairs to a darkened New York street and realizes he's been set up an instant before a man at the basement doorway shoots him. The man places a gun in the dead man's hand. As the crowd from a nearby dance club starts to gather around, the man backs them off with his New York Police Department detective shield.

That opening scene in "Q & A" gives you a pretty good idea just what kind of a guy you're dealing with in Lt. Mike Brennan, played by Nick Nolte. A veteran officer, known to be rough at times, but well respected, the Q & A, the name for the district attorney on-the-record investigation of the officer-involved



pass the popcorn
LeAnne Rogers

shooting, should be a cakewalk for Brennan. It starts out that way as novice assistant D.A. AJ Reilly, former policeman, son of police officer killed in the line of duty and 100 percent good old Irish lad, pattycaakes his way through Brennan's interview. Things start going south for Brennan when Reilly, played by Timothy

Hutton, interviews others with a connection to the case - Puerto Rican drug dealer Bobby Texador, who has a pretty good line about the murder of his associate. WITH HIS slicked back hair, broad moustache and pouch over his belt, Nolte captures a certain type of guy you'd pick out of a crowd as a cop, even down to his too tight sport coat. He's a loud bragging, bullying rac-

ist sort of fellow. The type of guy who tells his closest friend and ally in the department that he's the whitest black guy he ever knew. (I cleaned up that quote.) As a Puerto Rican drug dealer, Assante is sleek and loose, making no excuses for his profession or doing what he needs to survive. The major problems with the 1990 film are two-fold. Director Sidney Lumet's script isn't strongly focused and he gives the actors little to work with. That leads to the second problem which is Hutton, who is pale in every sense. Nolte and Assante have enough presence and skill as actors to fill in the blanks on their characters. Hutton has never outgrown that unformed adolescent quality that worked for him in "Ordinary People."

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Nick Nolte, with slicked back hair, broad moustache and pouch over his belt, captures the image of that certain type of guy you'd pick out of a crowd as a cop, even down to his too tight sport coat, in "Q & A."

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