



Marilyn Monroe a true goddess in 'Calendar Girl'

The year is 1962, a more innocent time. Millions of 18-year-old boys think of Marilyn Monroe as the goddess of their dreams, but only three of them plan to tell her in person in "Calendar Girl," opening Sept. 3 at suburban movie theaters.

The determined trio — Roy Darpinian (Jason Priestley), the self-appointed leader and the one with an endless supply of smooth talk and crazy ideas; Scott Foreman (Jerry O'Connell), a born follower and such a dead-ringer for Howdy Doody, right down to his wooden leg, that his nickname is "The Dood"; and sensitive, pragmatic, eternally buttoned-down Ned Bleuer (Gabriel Olds), a walking encyclopedia on Marilyn Monroe trivia.

Priestley, who stars in the Fox television series "Beverly Hills 90210," makes his feature film starring debut as Roy Darpinian in "Calendar Girl," a Columbia Pictures release directed by John Whitesell and written by Paul W. Shapiro, Debbie Robins and Gary Marsh to the producers. The executive producers are Penny Marshall and Elliot Abbott.

The music present throughout "Calendar Girl" intertwines original hits by such R&B legends as Otis Redding ("Respect"), Ray Charles ("What'd I Say"), and Peggy Lee ("Fever").

Priestley got to achieve a musical dream when he found himself singing with Chubby Checker, who makes a cameo appearance in the film.

Roy, Ned and Scott first meet at a Howdy Doody look-alike competition in which Scott seems like

PREVIEW

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Jason Priestley
starring as Roy

a shoo-in. As their friendship endures, the boys discover the wonders of women at 12, specifically in the form of Marilyn Monroe's nude calendar — "Miss Golden Dreams."

At 18, the three friends find themselves about to go in different directions: Roy into the Army, Scott to the altar and Ned to college.

Using his usual combination of charm and intimidation, Roy convinces them to take a weekend off from their small Nevada town and head for Hollywood in his father's borrowed sky blue Galaxie 500 convertible. Roy's plan is simple: they'll plant themselves at their idol's feet, or at least the foot of her driveway if they can find it, until she agrees to a date.

Their trip is unwittingly financed by Roy's employers, the Gallo Brothers, (Kurt Fuller and

Stephen Tobolowsky), Indian Springs' well-mannered and unconventional but still menacing loan sharks. When they discover Roy's unapproved loan, the Gallo Brothers set out after the boys, tracking them to the home of Roy's Uncle Harvey (Joe Pantoliano), an aspiring actor/flourishing bomb shelter salesman who lives in the Hollywood hills.

After trials and some disappointments, the three boys must finally face the real challenge of their pilgrimage. "They have to complete the transition into becoming men," said Priestley. "But they have to do it together and they're really bonded for life."

Throughout the chaos that ensues, the boys somehow manage to salvage the dream that brought them to Hollywood in the first place — the opportunity to meet Marilyn Monroe.

"Marilyn is the ultimate," said director John Whitesell. "Reaching her is like reaching Mount Olympus, and if they can just touch her, they take themselves out of being ordinary and make themselves extraordinary."

"I think Marilyn symbolizes that goal that's up there for all of us," said Priestley, "that if you want to go for but you're afraid to because if you fail, you're gonna feel like an idiot. So, Roy forces them all to take the leap of faith, that jump from being boys to becoming men."

"Calendar Girl" opens Friday at these suburban movie theaters: AMC Abbey, AMC Southfield City, AMC Wonderland, Showcase Sterling, Showcase Dearborn, Showcase Westland, Showcase Auburn Hills, United Artists 12 Oaks, United Artists West River, Star Winchester.



Dream seekers: Jerry O'Connell (left), Gabriel Olds and Jason Priestley star in the comedy "Calendar Girl," a Columbia Pictures release.

'Son of the Pink Panther' falls prey to bad direction



JOHN MONAGHAN

I'm not a great fan of "Pink Panther" movies. But after watching the slapdash new "Son of the Pink Panther," even I waxed nostalgic for Peter Sellers — who died in 1982, taking most of French detective Clouseau's charms with him.

And it's a shame too, because "Son" marks the first American starring vehicle for Italian film clown Roberto Benigni. The horse-faced comic had no in-jokes in the Jim Jarmusch movies — as an escaped convict in "Down By Law," and as a pumpkin-loving cab driver in "Night on Earth."

REVIEW

Desperate attempts to win laughs by falling off a bike or singing opera off-key don't mean that Benigni's trying to fill shoes too big for him or that he's even wearing the wrong ones. With someone other than Blake Edwards behind the camera, "Son of the Pink Panther" might be something special.

The title sequence finds Bobby McFerrin performing on a cappella version of Henry Mancini's jazzy "Panther" theme. Dodging the converging names on the credits, animated versions of the Panther and Clouseau yuck it up in a movie studio recording suite.

This may be the only clever moment in the movie, which quickly moves into James Bond territory with an international terrorist (Robert Davi, who played 007's drug-lord nemesis in "License to Kill") kidnapping a beautiful princess (Deborah Farentino).

The action is brutal and the body count surprisingly high for a movie supposedly aimed at family audiences.

Herbert Lom returns for a seventh time as Commissioner Dreyfus, who usually ends up in the hospital as a result of

What can you say about a movie where the biggest laughs come from a poodle who rides on strangers' legs?

Clouseau's clumsiness. The punch is softened considerably here, offering love interest with Claudia Cardinale (as Clouseau's mother) almost as an afterthought for past abuses.

He's still knocked around plenty, including the time when he jumps off a dock after a drowning Clouseau. The bit isn't funny because they are standing in knee-deep water. It's funny because this big-budget albatross, which can afford to shoot in five different countries, can't even disguise the wet suit beneath Lom's soggy shirt and tie.

The intentional humor in "Son of the Pink Panther" isn't nearly

as interesting. What can you say about a movie where the biggest laughs come from a poodle who rides on strangers' legs?

Director Edwards, who launched the "Panther" movies 30 years ago, has lost any sense of comic timing, especially in the action-packed Bondian climax at a Middle-Eastern fortress. Turn off Mancini's musical score and you'd see how clunky the filmmaking really is.

But hasn't this always been the schtick with the "Panther" movies? Just as Clouseau can bumble his way through any case and come out a hero, so can Edwards

direct mediocre comedies that still prove gold at the box office.

He and the series may have met their match with "Son of the Pink Panther," which, if there's any justice at all, should prove one of the summer's biggest bombs.

"Son of the Pink Panther" is now playing at these suburban theaters: AMC Laurel Park, Showcase Pontiac, AMC Abbey 8,

Showcase Westland, Star Winchester 8, AMC Americana West, Showcase Auburn Hills, United Artists 12 Oaks.

To leave a message for John Monaghan, dial 953-2047, mailbox number 1866, on a Touch-Tone phone, fax him a note at 591-7279, or write him in care of Entertainment, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

FILM CLIPS

"SON OF THE PINK PANTHER"

Released by: MGM/United Artists
Starring: Roberto Benigni, Herbert Lom, Claudia Cardinale, Deborah Farentino, Robert Davi
Directed by: Blake Edwards
Produced by: Tony Adams
Written by: Blake Edwards, Madeline and Steve Sunshine
Music by: Henry Mancini
Rated: PG (Some material may not be suitable for pre-teenagers.)
Running time: 93 minutes
Rating (out of a possible four):

Key: Don't miss it ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Strongly recommended ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Worth a look ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Wait for video ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

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