

'Wild Wild West' offers cool summer fun

BY JON KATZ
SPECIAL WRITER

Memo to Hollywood: Thanks, you can stop now.

After "The Avengers," "The Mod Squad," "My Favorite Martian" and too many other disappointing attempts to resurrect Baby Boomer TV on the big screen, they've finally made one that does what it should do. "Wild Wild West" pays respectful homage to the original series while using the expanded format to its fullest.

"The Wild Wild West" was a hit on CBS from 1965-1969. Its Jules Verne-ish look at post-

Civil War America gave us Robert Conrad as dashing Secret Service Agent James West and the late Ross Martin as his partner and master of disguise, Artemus Gordon. Their weekly exploits included diabolical villains, Conrad's bare-chested brawls and life-saving gadgets from some 18th century Sharper Image.

In this \$100 million version, Will Smith ("Men in Black") is West and Kevin Kline ("In & Out") is Gordon. They are The Odd Couple on the Lone Prairie.

As a departure from the TV show, West and Gordon are not

partners when we meet them. In fact, Gordon's not even a man when we meet them (master of disguise, remember?) They are thrown together by President Grant to bring diabolical villain Dr. Arliss Loveless to justice. Loveless is Shakespearean actor Kenneth Branagh, who joins the ranks of Vivien Leigh, Peter Sellers and Kate Winslet as Brits who play Americans better than Americans.

The plot is simple: wheelchair-bound Dr. Loveless has kidnapped our best scientists and will destroy the United States unless we give him...the United States. It seems he's a bit

pooped at losing "a lung, spleen, bladder, 35 feet of small intestine and the ability to reproduce, all in the name of the South." Actually, he plans to keep only the Rocky Mountain States for himself, returning the rest to their original owners ("Great Britain gets back all 13 colonies, except Manhattan.")

Will Smith parlayed Conrad's West, Indiana Jones and a lot of Eddie Murphy into his swash-buckling special agent. And he gets to buckle a lot of swashes; there's a rather large body count in "Wild Wild West," but nothing to keep the older kids home over.

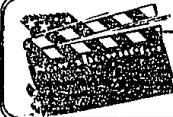
Smith breaks no new ground for himself as an actor. Instead, he uses his familiar charisma and humor to have a good time and give the viewer the same. He's a fine fit as the "dark stranger" whose theory is "shoot first, shoot second, shoot third and when everyone's dead, try to ask a question or two."

Kline seems less comfortable as Arlie; maybe it's those buck-wheel-filled breasts he sports in his first scene. Which brings us to Salma Hayek, who needs no such help at all from Wardrobe, thank you. Our lady-in-distress has little to do but breathe heavily and remember which

West-admiring lines go when ("He's impetuous...he's so courageous...he's so graceful.")

The film's biggest stars are "The Wanderer," a high-tech train with trap doors, sliding mirrors and such; and Loveless' ultimate weapon, an 80-foot-tall, eight-legged tractor set called Tarantula.

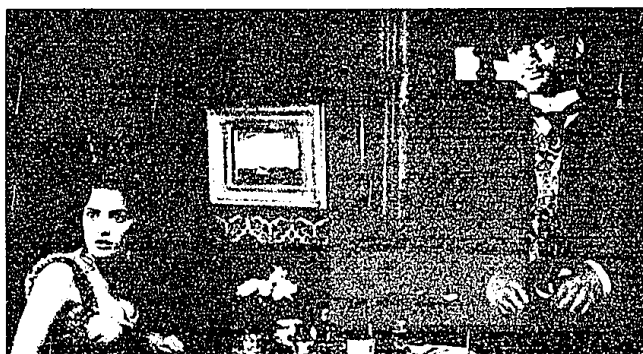
The signature sepia-tone opening, theme music and tongue-in-cheek all have been retained from the TV show. Under Barry Sonnenfeld's caring and inventive direction, "Wild Wild West" offers a lot of cool summer fun.



OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC

GUIDE TO THE MOVIES

National Announcements Showcase Cinemas Shenandoah Arlington, VA 22204 Between University & Wilson Blvd 248-375-2650 Bargain Movies Daily All Shows start at 6 pm Continuous Shows Daily Late Shows Wed-Thurs, Fri, Sat HP DENOTES NO PASS NP AMERICAN PIE (R) NP ARKINGTON ROAD (R) NP STAR WARS: EPISODE I: THE PHANTOM MENACE (PG) NP SOUTH PARK (R) NP WILD WILD WEST (PG-13) NP IDEAL HUSBAND (PG-13) NP THE SUMMER OF SAM (R) NP BIG DADDY (PG-13) NP THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER (R) NP AUTUMN POWERS: THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME (PG-13) NP TARZAN (G) Star Theatres The World's Best Theatres Bargain Movies Daily 11:50 AM Show Starts before 6:00 pm Now accepting Visa & MasterCard *HP Denotes No Pass Engagements Star Cinemas Great Lakes Shopping Center 248-444-8346 NP ARKINGTON ROAD (R) NP AMERICAN PIE (R) NP SUMMER OF SAM (R) NP WILD WILD WEST (PG-13) NP IDEAL HUSBAND (PG-13) NP THE SUMMER OF SAM (R) NP BIG DADDY (PG-13) NP THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER (R) NP AUTUMN POWERS: THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME (PG-13) NP TARZAN (G) Shenandoah Arlington, VA 22204 Between University & Wilson Blvd 248-375-2650 Bargain Movies Daily All Shows start at 6 pm Continuous Shows Daily Late Shows Wed-Thurs, Fri, Sat HP DENOTES NO PASS NP AMERICAN PIE (R) NP ARKINGTON ROAD (R) NP STAR WARS: EPISODE I: THE PHANTOM MENACE (PG) NP SOUTH PARK (R) NP WILD WILD WEST (PG-13) NP IDEAL HUSBAND (PG-13) NP THE SUMMER OF SAM (R) NP BIG DADDY (PG-13) NP THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER (R) NP AUTUMN POWERS: THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME (PG-13) NP TARZAN (G) Shenandoah Arlington, VA 22204 Between University & Wilson Blvd 248-375-2650 Bargain Movies Daily All Shows start at 6 pm Continuous Shows Daily Late Shows Wed-Thurs, Fri, Sat HP DENOTES NO PASS NP AMERICAN PIE (R) NP ARKINGTON ROAD (R) NP STAR WARS: EPISODE I: THE PHANTOM MENACE (PG) NP SOUTH PARK (R) NP WILD WILD WEST (PG-13) NP IDEAL HUSBAND (PG-13) NP THE SUMMER OF SAM (R) NP BIG DADDY (PG-13) NP THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER (R) NP AUTUMN POWERS: THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME (PG-13) NP TARZAN (G) Star Cinemas Great Lakes Shopping Center 248-444-8346 NP ARKINGTON ROAD (R) NP AMERICAN PIE (R) NP SUMMER OF SAM (R) NP WILD WILD WEST (PG-13) NP IDEAL HUSBAND (PG-13) NP THE SUMMER OF SAM (R) NP BIG DADDY (PG-13) NP THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER (R) NP AUTUMN POWERS: THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME (PG-13) NP TARZAN (G) Star Cinemas Great Lakes Shopping Center 248-444-8346 NP ARKINGTON ROAD (R) NP AMERICAN PIE (R) NP SUMMER OF SAM (R) NP WILD WILD WEST (PG-13) NP IDEAL HUSBAND (PG-13) NP THE SUMMER OF SAM (R) NP BIG DADDY (PG-13) NP THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER (R) NP AUTUMN POWERS: THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME (PG-13) NP TARZAN (G)	Star Cinemas 12144 Lakeshore Blvd. Northwestern, OH 44130 248-333-STAR No one under age 6 admitted for PG-13 & rated films after 6 pm FOR POSTERS AND TO PURCHASE TICKETS BY PHONE Call 248-333-STAR NEWCASTLE CINEMAS NP AMERICAN PIE (R) NP ARKINGTON ROAD (R) NP WILD WILD WEST (PG-13) NP SUMMER OF SAM (R) NP SOUTH PARK (R) NP BIG DADDY (PG-13) NP THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER (R) NP AUTUMN POWERS: THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME (PG-13) NP STAR WARS: EPISODE I: THE PHANTOM MENACE (PG) NP NOTTING HILL (PG-13) NP TARZAN (G) United Artists Cinemas Township 14 Located Adjacent to Home Depot Just North of the intersection of 14 Mike & Margery Rd. 248-645-2801 All Stadium Seating High Back Reclining Chair Seats Two-Day Advance Ticketing NP AMERICAN PIE (R) NP ARKINGTON ROAD (R) NP WILD WILD WEST (PG-13) NP SUMMER OF SAM (R) NP SOUTH PARK (R) NP BIG DADDY (PG-13) NP THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER (R) NP AUTUMN POWERS: THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME (PG-13) NP STAR WARS: EPISODE I: THE PHANTOM MENACE (PG) NP NOTTING HILL (PG-13) NP TARZAN (G) United Artists Cinemas Township 14 Located Adjacent to Home Depot Just North of the intersection of 14 Mike & Margery Rd. 248-645-2801 All Stadium Seating High Back Reclining Chair Seats Two-Day Advance Ticketing NP AMERICAN PIE (R) NP ARKINGTON ROAD (R) NP WILD WILD WEST (PG-13) NP SUMMER OF SAM (R) NP SOUTH PARK (R) NP BIG DADDY (PG-13) NP THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER (R) NP AUTUMN POWERS: THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME (PG-13) NP STAR WARS: EPISODE I: THE PHANTOM MENACE (PG) NP NOTTING HILL (PG-13) NP TARZAN (G) United Artists Cinemas Township 14 Located Adjacent to Home Depot Just North of the intersection of 14 Mike & Margery Rd. 248-645-2801 All Stadium Seating High Back Reclining Chair Seats Two-Day Advance Ticketing NP AMERICAN PIE (R) NP ARKINGTON ROAD (R) NP WILD WILD WEST (PG-13) NP SUMMER OF SAM (R) NP SOUTH PARK (R) NP BIG DADDY (PG-13) NP THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER (R) NP AUTUMN POWERS: THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME (PG-13) NP STAR WARS: EPISODE I: THE PHANTOM MENACE (PG) NP NOTTING HILL (PG-13) NP TARZAN (G)	Star Cinemas 11336 S. 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Adventure: Rita Escobar (Salma Hayek) and James West (Will Smith) star in "Wild Wild West," a fast-paced adventure sparkling with comedy, action and fantasy.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Scheduled to open Friday, July 16 "EVEN WEDDERS" Story of jealousy and sexual obsession. Stars Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman. "LAKE PLACID" A scientist, a game warden, a sheriff and an eccentric mythology professor converge near a remote lake in Maine to investigate a gruesome fatality. Their adventure, laced with humor and terror, leads to a shocking secret beneath the anything but placid waters. Stars Bridget Fonda, Bill Pullman, Oliver Platt. "THE BLAIN WITH PROJECT" Horror film about three college students, who in 1994 hired into Maryland's Black Hills Forest to shoot a documentary about a local legend, and were never heard from again. Stars Heather Donahue, Joshua Leonard. "THE WOOD" Comedy of three childhood friends reminiscing about years gone by the even of their friend's wedding. Stars Omar Epps, Tye Diggs, Richard T. Jones. Scheduled to open Friday, July 23 "DROPPED DEAD GORGEOUS" Comedy about a small town's obsession with its teenage beauty contest. Stars Kirstin Alley, Ellen Barkin, Kirsten Dunst. "TWO UPON A YESTERDAY" Exclusively at the Landmark Maple Theatre. A former lover in London gets the chance of a lifetime to turn back	Scheduled to open Wednesday, Aug. 11 "IN TOO DEEP" A police detective goes deep undercover to get a notorious gangster. But in his quest, he risks losing himself. Stars Omar Epps. "HEAT TO YOU" A teenage girl and boy who have grown up next door to one another have never made a love connection. But when long-time friends and neighbors gather for their high school's centennial celebration, they realize they were meant for each other all along. Stars Melissa Joan Hart and Stephen Collins. Scheduled to open Friday, Aug. 13 "BROKEDOWN PALACE" Two high school girls set off on a dream trip to Thailand following their graduation. The dream turns to a nightmare when they are accused of drug trafficking and sentenced to 32 years in a Thai prison until an expatriate American lawyer comes to their aid. Stars Claire Danes. Scheduled to open Friday, Aug. 20 "MICKY BLUE EYES" Romantic comedy about an English art dealer in New York who falls in love with the daughter of a Mafia boss. To win her hand, he embarks on a mission to thwart the Mob, but quickly finds himself laundering money and masquerading as the notorious mobster "Mickey Blue Eyes." Stars Hugh Grant, James Caan.
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Drama: Brad Pitt (left) and Edward Norton in a scene from "Fight Club" scheduled to open Friday, Aug. 6 at metro Detroit movie theaters.