MOVIES

'T-Rex' takes viewers back in time in IMAX style

By Victoria Diaz
Special Writer

Thwack! Bam! Zoom! Splat! The 3-D film, *T-Rex: Back to the Cretaceous* has arrived at the IMAX Theatre at Greenfield Village.

T-Rex is the first IMAX production to focus on the creatures that disappeared from the earth during the last part of the Mesozoic era. In the film, Tyrannosaurus rex and his kin are all computer-generated, marking a departure from films such as *Jurassic Park* and *Jurassic Park: The Lost World*, in which puppetry was occasionally used. *T-Rex*, directed by Brett Leonard (*Lawnmower Man*), runs for 50 minutes. It centers around a girl named Ally (Liz Stauber) and her father (Peter Horton), a hard-working paleontologist. Ally's dream is to become a paleontologist just like her dad, although he won't allow her to even lend a hand on any "digs" yet. She's too young and inexperienced, he believes, for such risky and serious stuff.

One fateful day when Ally drops in at the museum to visit her father, she finds herself stepping back in time. Actually, it's not a step, but a giant, vertiginous leap, as the jeans-clad adventurer travels 65 million years in reverse and meets, there in the vaporous jungle, the dinosaur of all dinosaurs.

The ferns in the jungle look a little fake, and the dinosaurs look and move pretty much like most movie dinosaurs, and this screenplay and these actors are not going to walk away with many awards. But, if you're a moviegoer with a pulse, you'll have tons of fun with *T-Rex*.

A bit surprisingly, some of the most remarkable sequences in the film occur not in the presence of the dinosaurs, but in Ally's contemporary world. At an archaeological dig, chipped pieces of rock seem to fly off in all directions and into our faces, making it impossible not to twitch and blink at the optical illusion. In another scene, when a bubbly aquarium comes into view, we can hardly resist the temptation to reach out and "touch" the wiggly wetness of the fish. From enormous bones and Egyptian statuary that appear to spin out of the museum's corridors and threaten to crack our heads, to the glossy buttons on Ally's sweater, to the tiny blemishes on her skin, we experience high-tech cinema that makes each scene seem more real than real. This is not your father's 3-D. For one thing, the Polaroid glasses with which we view *T-Rex* are like substantial sunglasses and valued at $50 apiece, according to IMAX sources. For another thing, the six-channel, multi-speaker sound system turns up the fun more than a few notches, as the images are projected across the 60 x 84-foot screen.

A colorful short called *Paint Misbehavin'* precedes *T-Rex*. Produced by the IMAX Corp. via a system in which animators don virtual reality goggles in order to actually "sculpt" the images in three-dimension, it's a dizzying, slap-happy spectacle in animated 3-D that almost steals the thunder from the main feature. When it comes to its goofy, raucous conclusion, *Paint Misbehavin'* will leave most moviegoers laughing and gasping, sure that they are bathed in paint and happily yearning for much more of the same.

IMAX Theatre

T-Rex: Back to the Cretaceous: *An Ornithomimus surprises Ally Hayden (Liz Stauber) in Imax Corp.'s latest adventure now showing at Henry Ford Museum's Imax Theatre.*

'M:I-2' looks at doomsday

By Bob Thomas
Associated Press Writer

When the first feature film version of the long-running TV series *Mission: Impossible* came out in 1996, critics complained that the plot was so murky as to be impenetrable. No matter. The high-tech action drama proved to be a huge moneymaker for Paramount and Tom Cruise, the movie's star and co-producer.

M:I-2, as the sequel is called, also suffers from plotting deficiencies, but it will further enrich Paramount and its parent Viacom, as well as Cruise. The credit belongs to John Woo, who has transferred the chop-socky dynamics of Hong Kong quickies to big-budget Hollywood movies.

Like most films of its genre, *Mission: Impossible 2* purveys a doomsday theme. An Australian pharmaceutical firm has developed a horrendously virulent virus called Chimera which can kill millions in short order. The company's boss has also ordered an antidote which could be worth billions of dollars. Chimera falls into the hands of terrorists led by the vicious Sean Ambrose (Dougray Scott).

Ethan Hunt (Cruise) is pulled from a rock-climbing adventure to report to Seville, Spain, where he gets his orders from his superior (Anthony Hopkins in a brief, unbilled appearance). Hunt is told to search for the terrorists and recover the virus. He is assigned a collaborator, a beautiful jewel thief named Nyah Hall (Thandie Newton). His logistical chief will be Luther Stickell (Ving Rhames, the only holdover from the 1996 film).

Hunt and Hall of course begin with an adversarial relationship, customary for buddy movies, male-male or male-female. And of course the relationship warms as they face unimaginable dangers together.

The romantic episodes offer brief respite from the wall-to-wall action. The method includes atomic-like explosions, extended shootouts lacking in sharpshooters, and gladiatorial kung fu accented by slow motion and ear-splitting sound effects. It worked in Hong Kong, and it works here – although the final hand-to-hand (or foot-to-head) battle of Hunt and Ambrose extends beyond plausible human endurance.

Cruise makes a convincing hero, and he reportedly performed many of his own stunts. His rock climbing and other daring feats seem like the real thing, but in today's world of digital magic, who can tell?

Newton, who appeared with Cruise in *Interview with the Vampire*, is perfectly cast as the tough but vulnerable thief. Her future seems unlimited.

The eminent Robert Towne (*Chinatown*, *Shampoo*) wrote the screenplay based on a story by Ronald D. Moore and Brannon Braga. Towne wrote the first *Mission: Impossible*, and this time he makes the story more accessible.

The Paramount release was produced by Cruise and Paula Wagner.

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COMING ATTRACTIONS

Scheduled to open Friday, June 2

BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
A street-smart FBI agent goes undercover as an outspoken Southern grandmother/ midwife to protect a beautiful single mother and her son from an escaped convict. Stars Martin Lawrence, Nia Long and Paul Giamati.

ST. FRANCISVILLE EXPERIMENT
A psychic, a ghost-hunter, a filmmaker and a historian fly to Louisiana to investigate an alleged haunted house plagued by the spirits of slaves who endured grisly torture.

Scheduled to open Friday, June 9

GONE IN SIXTY SECONDS
Remake of a 1974 film by H.B. Halicki in which Nicholas Cage plays a former car thief who is commissioned to steal 50 cars in one night. The hitch is another gang is planning to do the same.

GROOVE
Told from the perspective of an insider, Groove details one event-filled night in the underground rave scene in San Francisco.

SUNSHINE
Directed by Istvan Szabo, the film conjures up three themes: the inhumanity of human species, the symbolic meaning of a family name and the aching tolerance and acceptance in modern society.

Scheduled to open Friday, June 16

BOYS AND GIRLS
Romantic comedy explores the games that men and women play. Stars Freddie Prinze Jr., Claire Forlani, Jason Biggs.

TITAN A.E.
In a journey that begins after Earth ends, a rebellious teenager named Cale embarks on an adventure through space to find the legendary spacecraft, the Titan, which holds the secret to salvation for the human race. Animated full-length feature movie with the voices of Matt Damon, Drew Barrymore.

SHAFT
Samuel L. Jackson is Shaft, a private detective on the trail of a murderer who wants to eliminate the key witness to a crime. Stars Vanessa Williams.

Not your Momma: *Martin Lawrence stars in "Big Momma's House," opening this weekend at area movie theaters.*

JESUS' SON
Based on Denis Johnson's cult novel, this saga stars Billy Crudup, Denis Leary and Jack Black.

Scheduled to open Friday, June 23

BUTTERFLY'S TONGUE
Set against the backdrop of civil war in Spain 1936, this is the story of an extraordinary relationship between a shy young boy and his compassionate teacher who teaches him to find his way in an increasingly frightening world.

ME, MYSELF AND IRENE
Comedy about a mild-mannered Rhode Island cop with a split-personality disorder who escorts a woman back to her home town. The cop and his hyper-aggressive alter-ego both fall in love with the confused lady and he wages war – with himself – for her affections. Stars Jim Carrey, Renee Zelweger.

CHICKEN RUN
Full-length animated feature is set at Tweedy's Chicken Farm, where any chicken who doesn't make her egg quota can meet a "foul" fate. Features the voices of Mel Gibson, Julia Sawalha and Miranda Richardson.

AN AFFAIR OF LOVE
Directed by Frederick Fonteyene, a faux documentary style to illuminate a relationship intended to be strictly sexual.

Scheduled to open Friday, June 30

THE PERFECT STORM
Drama based on the true story about a disastrous storm at sea and its consequences to the ships and crews in its path. Stars George Clooney, Mark Wahlberg, Diane Lane.

ADVENTURES OF ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE
Boris and Natasha return in this live-action/ animated comedy where only Rocky and Bullwinkle stand in the way of a diabolical plot to take over the world.

THE PATRIOT
Set in South Carolina in 1776, epic features Mel Gibson as Benjamin Martin, a reluctant hero swept into the American Revolution. When the British arrive at his home and endanger what he holds most dear, Martin takes up arms alongside his son and leads a brave rebel militia into battle.

TROUB
Screwball comedy featuring Emily Watson as a streetwise but inarticulate security guard who takes an undercover job at a corrupt casino resort, only to become involved in plot to blackmail a promiscuous senator.

Upcoming releases for summer 2000

EL NORTE, REREELEASE
The search for roots and family provides the basis for this 1983 drama that tells of the plight of Central American political refugees.

JAILS, HOSPITALS AND HIP-HOP
Performance artist Danny Hoch featured in this film, based on Hoch's third solo live show.

THINGS YOU CAN JUST TELL BY
Contemporary drama takes a behind-the-scenes look at aspects of people's lives. Stars Glenn Close, Calista Flockhart, Holly Hunter and Cameron Diaz.