

Arts & Entertainment

'Burglar' a felony offense

Unfunny script smothers the talent of Goldberg, Goldthwait

By Kevin Cowan
Staff Reviewer

It appears that the comedy/drama narrative has nudged itself into commercialized American celluloid. This newborn genre relies on the comic attributes of one or more "big names" and hopes that the drama will carry its own weight.

"Burglar" is a weak attempt at capturing this latest fashion. The film could have pulled it off if the dialogue had been up to par. As it turns out, screenwriter Joseph Loeb III and director Hugh Wilson throw the main characters into a film full of wooden and irrelevant dialogue laden with fully worn-out cliches.

Movie Review

Unironically, the film places Whoopi Goldberg (the burglar) and Bob Goldthwait (Goldberg's irregular cronie, of "Police Academy" fame) into a typical West Coast setting trying to pass Goldberg off as a cat burglar with a Robin Hood code of ethics. The saintly thief gets caught up in a load of murder and counterfeit hoopla, forcing her to turn detective.

The stage is set; the San Francisco police force is working "double time" to try to apprehend the would-be murderer at the same time that she is looking for the real killer. . . . Of course, she's too quick for the stereotypically dumbfounded police force. I think the smart cop/dumb cop characters are due for a much-needed rest. Although setting the skeleton structure of this genre aside wouldn't hurt either.

Goldberg and Goldthwait are, oddly enough, comedians by trade. Both have shown proficiency at pulling anything from a snicker to an all-out belly laugh from their respective audiences; Goldberg has also shown the ability to pull tears, as well as laughter, in her recent stage



Whoopi Goldberg and director Hugh Wilson on the set of "Burglar."

efforts.

The fatal flaw is that Loeb and Wilson give her only a few scenes in which she can put forth the comedic babble that makes her funny. The rest of the film is Goldberg's flipside version of Eddie Murphy.

Out of context

Goldthwait's character, on the other hand, is out of context. He's shown one and only one character since his exposure to public appeal. While the half-retarded nerd/loonie portrayed by Goldthwait is seriously humorous, the character cannot be relied on to support a full-blown drama/comedy. Again, Goldthwait is only allowed to unleash his monologue in a couple of scenes. Thus, since he is not really an actor but the film relies on him as a co-star, the comedy arrives with too little frequency to yank the laughter from the sedated audience.

Wilson tries to pad the cast with big fish in an apparent effort to hide the beastly dialogue. He gets a seemingly out-of-work Lesley Ann Warren to play the co-heavy. Warren

plays a greedy dentist who accepts "tax-free" cash from Hispanic residents for mediocre dental work. She too appears as her normal character of the bitch, coaxing Goldberg into lifting the proverbial jewels from her ex-husband. She is a potential suspect in this whodunit, though not a terribly convincing one. Her snotty and whining monologue is unnecessary and probably could have been written out.

A happy ending

Fear not, however. As with every American story, there is a happy ending. And after paragraph after paragraph of bad there has to be a bit of good.

The good, in this case, is that the film has its moments. And those moments, though scarce, are truly laughable. The point remains that Goldberg and Goldthwait, given full

drawal — the need to laugh — pay two bucks and get a chuckle. "Burglar" is playing at the Plaza 4.

Austin's Wild Seeds play progressive roots

By Stew Magnuson
Senior Reporter

Three or four years ago, American music started returning to its roots. Maybe because it had nowhere else to go. That's a frightening and depressing thought. But the movement is also an exciting rediscovery of roots music by a new generation of music fans, too young to remember where the noise coming from their Walkmans came from.

Concert Preview

The problem is: How do we keep the music progressive?

The Wild Seeds, playing tonight at the Zoo Bar, are walking the tightrope between their roots and the "cutting edge." After a few listens to their latest LP, "Brave, Clean, and Reverent," on Jungle Records, I still can't figure out which direction the band is going. All I know is that I love the album. It's not good to question things you love, just accept them for what they are.

The Wild Seeds come from Austin, Texas. So what, you might say, so does everyone and their brother (the Vaughns, for example).

Being from Austin is becoming both a blessing and a curse, Michael Hall, lead singer-songwriter-guitarist, said in a phone interview.

"Even whole bands are moving to Austin now," Hall said. "The competition is fierce. There aren't as many clubs for a town of 500,000. Unless you're the T-Birds or Timbuk 3, it's getting hard to scrape together a crowd... it's getting harder to rise above the pack."

Hall is also afraid of an Athens

backlash hitting Austin.

"For a while all the bands were coming out of Athens, Ga., until everyone got tired of hearing about it. They might say, let's give other places a chance, like Lincoln, for example."

The Wild Seeds seem to combine Athens' ear for progression with Austin's ear for the best of the past. Whatever the music is made of, it's still rock 'n' roll. Songs like "Sharlene" and "I Work Hard" are bouncy dance numbers with mean sax solos. The highlight of the album is the haunting "Heaven Bound," which tells the story of a poor family in turmoil after the mother gives birth to twins and dies. The narrator watches his father under pressure to sell the twins for adoption to a "rich man." The whole scene takes place in a train station.

'I was just overcome by the story. It shows the truth is stranger than fiction.'

— Hall

It's a true story, Hall said. The band played in St. Louis and visited a renovated train station. A local paper had asked for people's memories of the station and had them displayed inside.

"I was just overcome by the story," Hall said. "It shows that truth is stranger than fiction."

If you want to find out where American music is going and where it's been at the same time, the Wild Seeds play tonight at the Zoo. Cover is \$3 and the show starts at 9 p.m.

'Platoon,' Newman win top Oscars

LOS ANGELES — "Platoon," a grim film about the brutalizing effects of the Vietnam War, won top honors Monday at Hollywood's glamour-filled 59th annual Academy Awards, while Paul Newman was a sentimental choice to claim his first acting Oscar.

More than 300 diehard fans had gathered outside the Music Center by dawn to cheer their favorite stars when they arrived later for the nationally televised show, whose hosts this year were Paul Hogan, Goldie Hawn and Chevy Chase.

Early arrivals were in a festive mood, despite the overnight ordeal in sleeping bags. The most enthusiastic was Denise Pfeiffer, 25, of Edison, N.J., who was the first to establish her position — Thursday morning. Why did she come so far to witness the Oscar hoopla?

"Because I heard Tom Cruise was going to be a presenter," she said. "They lied. But I'm glad I came anyway."

Especially since I will see William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy."

"Platoon" won best picture. A placard promoted James Woods as best actor for his role in "Salvador." One maverick fan suggested evangelist Oral Roberts for "Best Actor."

Oscars

"Platoon's" competition for best picture of 1986 was Woody Allen's "Hannah and Her Sisters," "A Room With a View," "The Mission" and "Children of a Lesser God."

Oliver Stone has already won the Director's Guild prize for "Platoon," and that is almost always a precursor of the Oscar for best director. Stone won for "Best Director."

Newman, who received his seventh nomination this year for "The Color of

Money," won a special Oscar last year for his career achievements. He was one of the few top nominees who did not plan to attend the ceremonies. He won for "Best Actor."

Other winners include:

- Marlee Martin, awarded the "Best Actress" Oscar for her performance in "Children of a Lesser God."

- Dianne Wiest, awarded the "Best Supporting Actress" Oscar for her performance in "Hannah and Her Sisters."

- Michael Caine, awarded the "Best Supporting Actor" Oscar for "Hannah and Her Sisters."

- "The Assault," a film from the Netherlands, won an Oscar for "Best Foreign Film."

- "Take My Breath Away" won for "Best Song from a Film."

- Steven Spielberg won the Irving Thalberg Oscar for his significant contribution to the film industry in the past few years.

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