

Latest 'Ernest' film utterly without humor

By John Payne
Senior Reporter

Television commercial star Jim Varney has reprised his role as Ernest Worrel in "Ernest Goes to Jail," yet another in what already seems like an onslaught of bad movies starring the Roberts Dairy buffoon. Never has the importance of being Ernest been so minuscule.

This hair-brained, utterly humorless flick simply is more than any film-goer should be forced to endure. The intent here obviously is slapstick, but it has failed miserably.

Many of the scenes appear to be a direct rip-off of the recent Pee Wee Herman movies. It's a good sign that a screenplay is in trouble when it starts borrowing heavily from Pee Wee.

To go into any kind of depth as to what this movie is about would be pointless. Suffice to say that Ernest, who works as a janitor in a bank,

suddenly finds himself in the Big House after being switched with the prison tough guy. The baddie (also played by Varney) bears an uncanny resemblance to Ernest, so with the help of his thugs, he pulls the switcheroo while Ernest is taking a tour of the penitentiary.

And so, as innocent Ernest erroneously is incarcerated, the convict,

movie

"Nash," is out living Ernest's life -- and plotting to rob the bank that he now works at. Ernest, on the other hand, is scheduled to fry in the electric chair and must find a way to escape and stop Nash.

Nothing like a little capital punishment humor. It's fun for the whole family.

"Ernest Goes to Jail" was ill-fated from the beginning. Its makers obviously were operating under the as-

sumption that Varney is funny. He isn't. He wears thin very quickly, and watching him stumble around, get thumped on the head, and work his way in and out of preposterous situations over and over again, makes for a painfully bad movie.

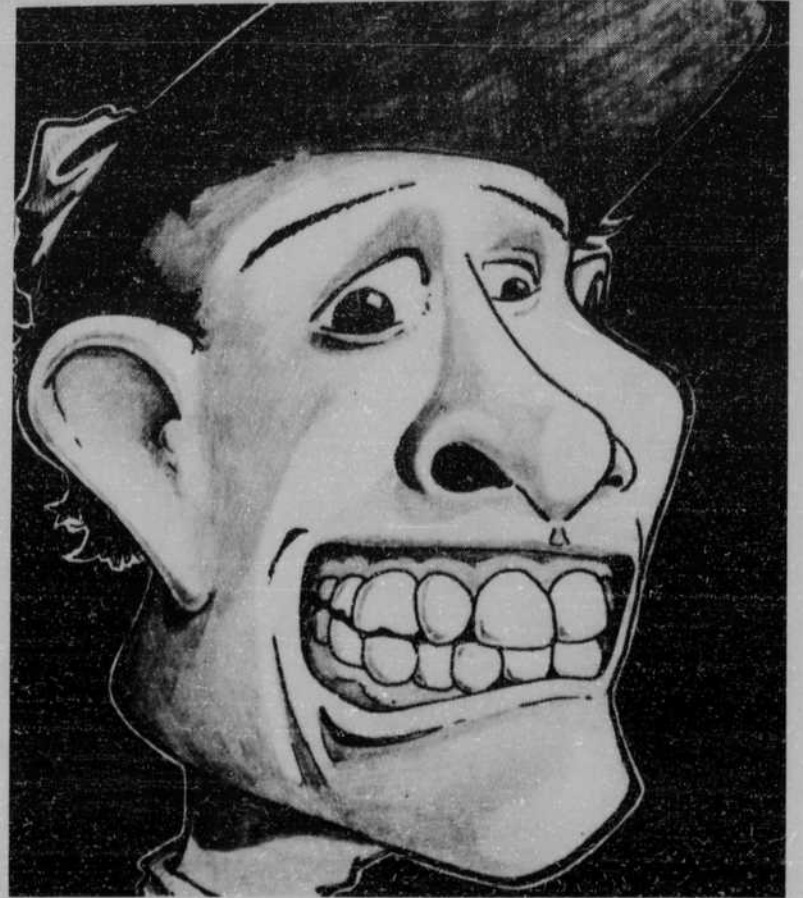
And that's the most pitiful thing about "Ernest Goes to Jail." It doesn't even have enough bad material to make it to the end of the movie -- it has to repeat the same idiotic gags three or four times just to fill up the 1 1/2 hours. The writing here is so inept that every joke can be seen coming down main street before the punch line is given.

One day, perhaps when we are all dead and gone, Hollywood screenwriters will realize that unbelievably stupid people are not funny, only annoying.

Some more advice for filmmakers: never cast a dairy products spokesman as the lead in the comedy, with boxer Randall "Tex" Cobb and various "Hee-Haw" stars in supporting roles. There probably are more qualified people out there.

Here's hoping that Varney will go back to doing 30-second TV commercials and stop making movies. If not, let's pray that his next flick will be "Ernest Goes Away."

Know what I mean?



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Urban Dance Squad uses multitude of sounds in respectable debut effort

By Michael Deeds
Senior Editor

Urban Dance Squad
"Mental Floss for the Globe"
Arista

Yo, I'm rappin' and uh scratchin', and uh, no bands are matchin' -- ME/ I'm fusin' rap, punk, funk, it's a snap/ Yo, I'm copyin' Colour, Ice-T, Fishbone and others/ But I'm different 'cause I rap, I swear, I swear, I swear,

no crap . . .

So goes the story for Urban Dance Squad, a talented band undoubtedly, but nothing to hold the rock presses over.

Bragged up pretentiously by Arista as a band "at the hard core of the new dance underground," the quintet specializes in a sound that does mix a

SOUNDS

little funk, some major scratching, cuts and percussion over the steady, typical mouthings of vocalist Rudeboy. But this Amsterdam-based Dance Squad depends more on rapping and less on jamming than some of their musical associates.

Arista claims the band "blew bands like Firehose and 24-7 Spyz off the stage at Poppark Festival '89."

OK, guys, maybe the band played great, but let's wait until they are established in the states before we start badmouthing established acts like

Hose and Spyz, both famous for monstrous live shows.

Urban Dance Squad plays with a lot of sounds at once, and frankly, they must be praised for avoiding electronic rhythms and pre-recorded scratches, unlike most of our favorite rap acts today.

Tres Manos does dabble with appealing but quiet guitar riffs in most of the songs, conjuring memories of good Beastie tunes. But Rudeboy likes his reverb, which becomes less ominous and more annoying after awhile.

"Fast Lane" captures some of the band's supposed live energy, while "Famous When You're Dead" pokes fun at the world of martyr mass appeal.

On a dimmer note, however, "Piece of the Rock" bangs the Nancy Reagan crack message out for the millionth time to a world that knows the same old song by heart.

Urban Dance Squad is a respectable band making a respectable debut effort. The band takes few chances on the 13 cuts, but after touring with acts like Red Hot Chili Peppers and Tin Machine, should have little trouble breaking out in America.

Chills

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Andrew Todd with keyboards and backing vocals, Justin Harwood on bass and backing vocals, and James Stephenson on drums.

There really is nothing special about this album. For the most part, it is boring and not very appealing at times.

The sound of The Chills is very hard to pinpoint. At best, it is pop alternative rock with some seriousness and silliness mixed in. One thing going for The Chills is a unique sound, with the standard lineup of guitar, bass, drums and keyboards. Their sound is anything but ordinary. Their use of keyboards is extraordinary; unlike many bands, The Chills rely heavily on a weird, innovative keyboard sound.

Lyricaly, Phillipps focuses more on the imaginative side of life, which proves to be to very strange at times.

The only bright spots on "Subma-

rine Bells" are "Heavenly Pop Hit" and "Dead Web." Both songs are upbeat, weird, poppy and downright silly, with an interesting carnival-sounding keyboard persistent throughout.

On "Heavenly Pop Hit," Phillipps pokes fun at the music world and the way pop stars act and gloat.

"And so I stand and the sound goes straight through my body/ I'm so bloated up happy I could throw things around me/ And I'm growing in stages and have been for ages/ Just singing, and floating -- and free. . . / It's a heavenly pop hit -- if anyone wants it."

Aside from those few bright spots, not much else sticks out substantially on "Submarine Bells." The keyboards and vocals are neat and everything, but The Chills can't depend on keyboards and vocals alone. They aren't Depeche Mode.

It could still be a while before The Chills heat up the music charts.

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