

AT THE MOVIES

Summer big screen borrows from books, television

Cartoons, comics end up in theaters

As we leave this fine institution for the next three months, we should remind ourselves of one of the best things to do during the summer. No, it's going to movies, you silly goose!

This summer will be full of big-budget flicks with big-budget names, and there will be more movies than can be packed into one single story.

This summer's films bring books, cartoons and comics to the big screen. Of course, a couple of sequels will make their way in as well.

All release dates are tentative, especially in Nebraska.

The Crow (May 11) — Brandon Lee's last film; he died on the set just days before his scenes were completed. Lee's death was one of several bizarre — and violent — incidents that occurred on the set of "The Crow."

Based on the ultra-violent comic book series, Lee portrays a punk rock singer who is murdered by a gang of hoods, who then rape and kill his girlfriend. Lee's character comes back to life to kick some butt. "The Crow" was originally set to be released on May 13th (Friday the 13th), but was moved up two days (just in case).

Maverick (May 20) — One of several television series brought to the movies, with always-bankable Mel Gibson in the title role. This western adventure also stars Jodie Foster and James Garner, who played Maverick in the original TV series.

Beverly Hills Cop III (May 25) — After a seven-year absence from the theaters, Axel Foley (Eddie Murphy) comes back to Beverly

Hills. Rumor has it that if Murphy doesn't score with this one, he's in deep doo-doo.

The Flintstones (May 30) — The long-time favorite cartoon comes to the big screen as John Goodman walks a mile in Fred Flintstone's ... outfit. Other co-stars include Rick Moranis, Rosie O'Donnell and Elizabeth Perkins. Even Dino will be showing up!

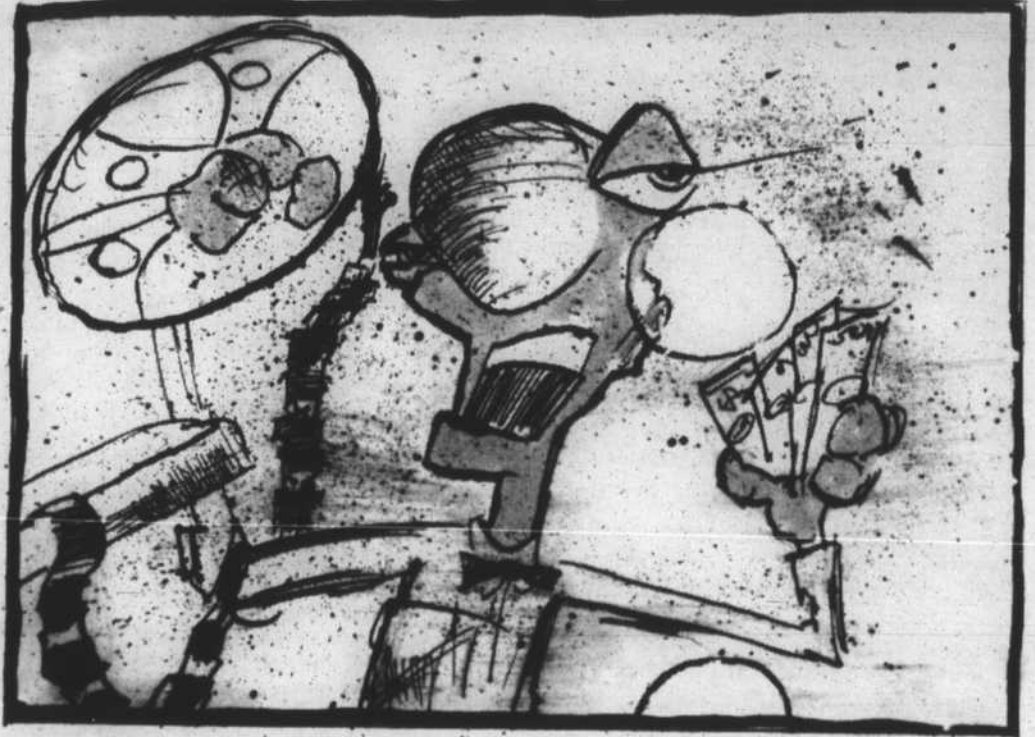
City Slickers II (June 10) — Billy Crystal is back in the saddle again, and so is Jack Palance (yes, he died in the first one, but he'll be back). Everybody is looking for gold this time around.

Wolf (June 17) — Jack Nicholson and Michelle Pfeiffer together again (last time was "The Witches of Eastwick", and that made oodles of money). In "Wolf," Nicholson slowly turns into a wolf, and Pfeiffer lays around in a slinky nightgown.

Wyatt Earp (June 24) — The second movie in the last year telling of the life of Wyatt Earp (the first was "Tombstone"), it stars Kevin Costner in the title role. "Wyatt Earp" will be about three hours long and also stars Dennis Quaid and Oscar-winner Gene Hackman.

The Shadow (July 15) — The old-time radio serial and subject of several comic incarnations, both good and bad. Alec Baldwin plays Lamont Cranston, who combats crime as "The Shadow" using his masterful powers of hypnotism and deduction. Penelope Ann Miller co-stars.

The Client (July 22) — John Grisham, after successes in "The Firm" and "The Pelican Brief," brings forth his third book-to-movie. It stars Susan Sarandon, who plays a lawyer who gets involved in something way over her head. At least he's never written about this type of



James Mehling/DN

thing before.

The Mask (July 29) — Based on the comic book, "The Mask" stars Jim Carrey ("Ace Ventura: Pet Detective") as Stanley Ipkiss, a meek bank teller that finds a mysterious mask. When worn, the mask not only renders its wearer totally invulnerable, but also completely insane. It looks to be very interesting, quite hilarious, and also to have some top-of-the-line

special effects.

Clear and Present Danger (August 12) — It appears to be a three-peat for Tom Clancy, who brought his writings to the screen with great success in "The Hunt for Red October" and "Patriot Games." Harrison Ford is back again as Jack Ryan, and he's in the middle of a drug war.

— Gerry Beltz

Movie pokes fun at political correctness, its followers

"PCU"



"PCU," an "Animal House"-esque film of the '90s, will definitely appeal to the majority of today's college crowd.

The directorial debut of Hart Bochner (remember the cocaine-snorting guy in "Die Hard"?), PCU is a film that speaks to every person who still calls "non-human companions" pets or has been chastised for calling a "residence hall" a dorm.

Bochner slams political correctness and its invasion of universities. He also slams people who think a cause is a way of life and people who change causes as easily as others change diet colas.

Bright-eyed, bushy-tailed Tom (Chris Young) has come to Port Chester University to check out the

campus. His host for the weekend is Droz (Jeremy Piven), a party-guy with his finger on the heartbeat of the campus.

PCU is home to high-and-mighty morals and political correctness. A protest has occurred literally every day on the campus.

Droz and his crew, however, are trying to give the university's political correctness a nudge. Unlike the mindless antics in "Animal House," their stunts are designed to wake students up and make them smell the coffee.

In the past, they have made their stabs with pranks (speed bumps on the wheelchair ramps, free cigarettes for Earth Day, etc.), but the coup-de-resistance is the engagement of an ancient tradition that used to be performed every weekend by the ancestors before them, something that would throw the moral-minded students of PCU into an uproar.

A party.

The funniest moments of the film are when Droz gives the naive Tom sage advice on surviving at PCU. Piven's fast-talking sarcastic soliloquies are not unlike the humor we have heard from Denis Leary in the past, before he decided to appear in half of the films made in the United States.

Also hilarious are the sarcastic depictions of the various groups on the PCU campus ("causheads," "womynists," etc.), and their respective antics.

Unfortunately, "PCU" is a very hit-and-miss film, with more misses than hits. Most of the funny and interesting moments come courtesy of Piven, who doesn't appear nearly enough in the film.

Go catch "PCU" after finals or as a study break. It's a good flick to catch after your brain has gone bye-bye.

— Gerry Beltz



Courtesy of Twentieth Century Fox

Droz (Jeremy Piven, left) shows Tom (Chris Young) around campus in "PCU."

Prison movie breaks sci-fi mold

"No Escape"



"No Escape" provides a welcome escape from the shoddily made sci-fi/adventure films of late.

Director Martin Campbell ("Defenseless") and producer Gale Anne Hurd ("Aliens" and "T2") combine to create a chilling future of incarceration.

It is the year 2022 and prisons are privately owned and operated. Marine Captain John Robbins (Ray Liotta, "Goodfellas") is sent to Absalom, a jungle island inhabited only by hardened criminals.

Robbins first encounters the Outsiders, violent groups of animalistic men led by the sadistic and humorous Marek (Stuart Wilson, "Lethal Weapon III").

Barely escaping with his life, Robbins manages to stumble across the camp of the Insiders, a civilized

colony of misfits trying to recapture the lives they knew before.

The Insiders are aggressively loyal to a former surgeon known only as the Father (Lance Henriksen, "Aliens"). Robbins reluctantly joins the Insiders and helps them defend against the Outsiders and search for a way to escape.

The special effects involved in the filming of the man-made prison where Robbins is moved from are fantastic. The scene where a prison car streaks up on a monorail across a desert background is exceptional.

The effects contrast well with the primitivism of Absalom. The convicts must make weapons and supplies from whatever is available. Almost all of the props made for the movie were similarly constructed to add to the realism. The village of the Insiders was also assembled in entirety, complete with functional water wheel and blacksmith shop.

The acting was well-delivered on all counts. Liotta was great as

the bad-ass Robbins, a man who has turned his back on society and must come to terms with the horrors of his past.

Kevin Dillon gave a solid performance as Casey, a young convict who, although guilty, retained his innocent character. As the standard youngster who yearns to be more like the hero, he follows Robbins around like a sick puppy.

But the real show-stealers are the heads of the rival camps, Henriksen and Wilson. Henriksen's stoic manner clashes well with Wilson's ruthless banter.

The film's fights, some of them involving dozens of participants, are well-choreographed. Usually the cheesiest part of sci-fi films, these stand out as very near to real.

"No Escape" is not completely devoid of unrealistic inconsistencies, but it provides a solid two hours of adventurous entertainment.

— Joel Strauch



Courtesy of Savoy Pictures

Ray Liotta, right, stars with Kevin Dillon in Martin Campbell's futuristic action movie "No Escape."