

Movie year in review

Gerry Beltz

"We saw a film about a pig get nominated for numerous prestigious awards."

For this movie critic, these past two semesters have been fairly decent and busy.

Nebraska became the center of Hollywood attention in "To Wong Foo: Thanks For Everything, Julie Newmar." The NC-17 rating debated raged again with the abysmal "Showgirls." And we got our first taste of Pierce Brosnan as the new James Bond.

And all before Christmas. We also lost a few famous faces over the last nine months. Midge Sinclair, Dean Martin and George Burns all bid their final curtain calls and have moved on to the great silver screen in the sky.

Over the last few months, we saw a film about a pig get nominated for numerous prestigious awards, a Scottish epic walked away with five Oscars tucked under the kilt, and we witnessed the connection between alcohol, death, prostitution and Academy Award nominations.

This led to an interesting observation: quite frequently, Oscar-worthy films often don't make great deals of money.

Check this out: the top ten grossing films for 1995 were (in ascending order): "Seven," "Waterworld," "Crimson Tide," "Die Hard With A Vengeance," "Casper," "Ace Ventura 2," "Pocahontas," "Apollo 13," "Batman Forever" and "Toy Story."

Five of these films (by my count) were nominated in the lesser well-known categories (special effects,

moviegoers into the theaters in droves.

Quentin Tarantino mixed vampires and gangsters in his latest concoction "From Dusk Till Dawn," which had the gore of a horror film, but enough campy humor to bring in the non-horror fans as well.

Over the last few months, we've seen the return of some foreign directors. One of which swore he would never return.

John Woo, action-film director extraordinaire, gave America another chance after his terrible experience working with Jean-Claude Van Damme on "Hard Target."

For his return, Woo teamed up John Travolta and Christian Slater, threw in his usual amount of explosions, gunplay and cunning stunts, and came up with the mega-hit "Broken Arrow."

Jackie Chan, familiar to American audiences from the two "Cannonball Run" movies, made a welcome return to our movie screens in "Rumble In The Bronx" (which was filmed in Vancouver, but we'll forgive him).

Comedy wasn't standing still either. Robin Williams made a surprise appearance in "To Wong Foo," then went on to pump up "The Birdcage" with his rapier — and often improvised — wit.

Oh, my favorite movies from the past two semesters? My votes go to "The American President," "Seven," "From Dusk Till Dawn" and "Rumble In The Bronx."

Beltz is a senior English education major and a Daily Nebraskan film critic.

Music

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Frank Black produced his best solo effort yet and wrote some of his best material since the Pixies' "Bossanova" with "The Cult of Ray."

Locally, Omaha's Frontier Trust released its first full-length, "Speed Nebraska." Full of the same high-speed Nebraska pride as the band's handful of 7" EPs, this album is low in minutes but high in energetic music that the boys in the band like to call "tractor punk."

In Lincoln, Plastik Trumpet's debut release, "Are You P.T.?" set up a nice change of pace for the usually punk-heavy Omaha-Lincoln music market.

But not all local news was necessarily good. Over the past year, Ritual Device and the Millions were just two of the locals who called it quits. Just recently, Heroes and Villains and Polecat did the same. And local near-legends Mercy Rule were abruptly dropped from their contract with Relativity Records at the beginning of 1996.

On the good concert front, Omaha and Lincoln had a serious lack of them. Not that this is unusual, but the few good shows that did roll into the area were worth seeing.

311 hit the Hurricane's stage (before it was permanently closed) and, in doing so, made its triumphant return to the Nebraska concert scene.

In Omaha, some music royalty paid a visit when the Temptations played at the Orpheum Theater. Their music and suave sophistication, when combined with a wildly enthusiastic crowd, made for one of the best concerts I've ever seen.

But the Wesley Willis Fiasco's recent show at Mudslide Slim's gave even the Emperors of Soul a run for their money. Willis' ferocious intensity and his band's tongue-in-cheek hard rock kept the packed house at Slim's in constant motion. In short, the beer and the bodies flew.

And last but not least, a raucous crowd and a handful of insensitive security guards contributed to create Omaha's first full-scale concert riot in quite some time.

Here's hoping that next year will give us a few more good concerts, a lot more good albums and another healthy little dose of rock 'n' roll rebellion. We're in Nebraska, after all, what more could we ask for?

Randall is a sophomore news-editorial major and the former Daily Nebraskan arts and entertainment editor.

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