

Van Sant to remake 'Bird on a Wire'

BY ANNE HECHÉ
Studio heterosexual

With studios clambering for sure-fire hits in an age of decreasing profit margins, Universal has commissioned another project to its hottest, hippest director, Gus Van Sant.

"Not only do I direct my films, but I've seen other movies as well," he said in Wednesday's press conference.

It's true. Van Sant has seen other movies and liked them so much he has decided to completely remake them using the techniques, styles and even personal habits of past directors.

This includes sleeping with their wives, adopting their last names and intercepting personal mail and phone

calls. Van Sant's unique style of filmmaking has been hailed as "innovative" and "perfectly legal" by Universal execs, who have rewarded him this past week with a new assignment.

Revealed in yesterday's press conference, Van Sant informed the press room (filled with nine reporters from Entertainment Weekly and one from the Daily Halfasskan) that he will soon begin work on a shot-by-shot, angle-by-angle, joke-by-joke remake of the comedy action thriller "Bird on a Wire."

"We selected this movie because it was so perfect the first time that it just had to be redone," Van Sant said.

"If you liked it the first one, wait till you see it in color," he bragged.

The director of some of the country's biggest and hippest stars has already decided on the cast for the new shoot.

Van Sant, who said that the old "Bird on a Wire" was fit only for nursing home screening rooms, has plans to freshen the film with hot young stars.

To make the film more accessible for Van Sant's target audience, the cast of "Cruel Intentions" will be lifted directly into the film.

Reese Witherspoon is slated as the vivacious but virginal 19-year-old Marianne Graves (previously played by Oldie Hawn) who recognizes an old flame, now an FBI informant.

Ryan Phillippe will fill the three-sizes-too-large shoes of Mel Gibson as the hunky, hilarious and rockin' haircut

cool guy Rick Jarmin.

Because of obvious age differences in the new cast, Van Sant has made a few minor changes to the script while preserving the integrity of the original production.

These changes include Phillippe masturbating through a hole in the wall and Witherspoon losing her virginity in a torrid teen sex scene.

Sarah Michelle Gellar, who plays a supporting role in the film, is also slated to plunge a stake into the heart of a corrupt FBI agent.

Also, Phillippe will play a shockingly cool mathematical genius, who is really a jaded janitor. All this will happen before he is on the run from the FBI and masturbates to a scene of Witherspoon undressing.

But Van Sant assures fans of the original "Bird on a Wire" that his new film will be the perfect tribute to the beloved classic.

"Everybody knows that 'Bird on a Wire' was a great movie and one that many people haven't seen on the big screen," he said.

"This is my chance to recreate a perfect movie, and find out what it feels like to be a great director.

"Plus it'll make me millions."

Van Sant refused to comment on rumors regarding a much-anticipated remake of the worn-out sci-fi hit "Star Wars," but promised that audiences wouldn't be disappointed with Keanu Reeves as Skywalker.

"Wait till he catches his sister undressing," Van Sant teased.

Cover yer asses; Flatley in charge of Lied Center

BY LIZA MINELLI
Class act

In a surprise move today, the Lied Center for Performing Arts fired Director Charles Bethea and named Irish dance diva Michael Flatley his replacement.

"The Lied needs to increase its sex appeal," said Nora Giggle-Gore, the head of marketing. "Sex sells tickets. And Michael knows all about sex."

"Do I ever," replied Flatley. "With my impeccable pecs and Irish package, I've created a cult following for 'Lord of the Dance.' People pay 40 bucks a ticket to see a bunch of 19-year-olds on speed jump around for two hours."

Shortly after the announcement, Flatley held a press conference to unveil next year's lineup.

The season will open with the candy-coated musical "Annie," starring Carol Channing. The inexhaustible 140-year-old has regressed back to childhood thanks to a plethora of plastic surgery and the recent onset of Alzheimer-induced dementia. The Lied Center performance will be her world premiere as the cute, cunning orphan.

"Maybe it's that guttural voice. Maybe it's that senile look in her eyes. Whatever it is, people love Carol," Flatley said.

Following "Annie," the Lied Center will bring in "Road Dogs." A wildly popular "tribute" to the dance troupe "Tap Dogs," "Road Dogs" brings the world of highway construction to the stage. Featuring real road workers, "Road Dogs" is a two-hour tour de

force of foul language, spitting, shirts-off love handles and loud drilling noises.

Recognizing a gap in the Lied's fine arts programming, Flatley announced plans for a new performance series called "Artistic Flesh." The series — an ongoing venture between the Lied Center and Waverly's finest strip joint, Shakers — will feature singing, dancing and acting troupes of bare-chested men and women. The highly-acclaimed Chippendale Dancers will be the first in the series.

"The artistic training the Chippendales undergo is incredibly rigorous," Giggle-Gore said. "They spend hours learning how to unbutton their shirts while wiggling their tushes. It takes years to achieve their level of skill."

Flatley plans to close the season with a one-night engagement by master magician David Copperfield. The modern-day Houdini plans to make the "Torn Notebook" disappear.

Unlike Copperfield's vanishing Statue of Liberty and Orient Express, however, "Torn Notebook" will not be made to reappear.

"People will be so glad to see it gone, they may start riots if he brings it back," Giggle-Gore said.

If all goes well, Flatley said, his first season at the helm of the Lied will break box-office records.

If not, Flatley has agreed to pose for Playgirl and donate the proceeds to the Lied. Of course, he may do that anyway.

"He's such an altruist," Giggle-Gore said.

into airplay on radio stations and into the CD players of everyday consumers.

Renewed interest in and sales of music from David Cassidy, Mötley Crüe and Lionel Richie were the first warning flags for the researchers, who have been unheard of until recently.

"We've been trying to keep our research as low-profile as possible," said Miles Soltzer, spokesman for the scientists. "But just last weekend, we had the misfortune of seeing the Vanilla Ice story."

"We can no longer view this as a small phenomenon. Action must be taken before popular culture and good taste are wiped out altogether."

Indeed, Sotzer and the scientists painted an unseemly picture of the future. With a seemingly endless supply of charts and diagrams, they illustrated how artists such as The Jets,

Duran Duran and Bananarama could resurface and lead to widespread destruction.

"I think we all remember 'Cherry Pie,'" Soltzer said. "And I've heard a rumor that a Warrant special is in the works."

"I don't think I have to tell you how concerned we are."

Upcoming "Behind the Music" features on Rod Stewart and Manfred Mann also have the scientists worried.

"I'll admit that I used to have a real weakness for 'Do Ya Think I'm Sexy,' but I wouldn't wish its return on my worst enemy," said Janeane Williams, one of the researchers who first took notice of VH-1's damaging effects.

"Let Rod play on cruise ships, but don't let him back into our homes."

"We just can't take this type of reckless behavior anymore, and we shouldn't have to."



NOT-MUCH-COURTESY PHOTO
MICHAEL FLATLEY, the self-proclaimed "Lord of the Dance," will assume command of the Lied Center. As a result, we can expect a lot of lame shit in Lincoln in coming months. Flatley will use his newfound power to show off his chiseled and well-oiled physique to new audiences.

If you didn't know already: VH-1 is evil

BY LEIF GARRETT
Wannabe rock star

At first, it seemed like an innocent television program. A diversion from the stress of daily life and an alternative to mind-numbing sitcoms.

But what VH-1's "Behind the Music" has become, according to a group of scientists, is a threat to the delicate ecosystem that exists in modern popular music.

Some of those scientists took their case to the public Wednesday, denouncing the VH-1 series as a "serious risk to music as we know it."

The gist of the scientists' claim is that "Behind the Music" attempts to revive public interest in musicians whose careers have naturally declined; and as a result, many deservedly obscure artists have been thrust back

T&A toons

