



This Week: Last Action Hero

BY TRENT DRAKE

YES, YOU READ THAT CORRECTLY. Believe it or not, and at risk of bringing about the Apocalypse, I'm reviewing a recent, well-known movie and thus violating my Prime Directive. Hey, if a toupeed, corset-wearing... dramatically... pausing ... incredibly ancient starship captain can do it, why can't I?

Unless you were dead in the spring of 1993 (and if you were, Welcome Back!) you have

probably heard about *Last Action Hero*. Arnold Schwarzenegger (hereafter known as "Arnie" to save my throbbing fingers) only did hundreds of print articles and at least as many television appearances to plug the flick. Heck, there was even a plan to put the movie logo on the nose of a satellite-launching rocket, but (prophetically!) they couldn't get it off the ground (literally! This is NASA we're talking about!).

Maybe it was all the hype, or maybe it was the fact that Arnie kept giving away the plot every time he opened his mouth. Or maybe it was those damn *Super Mario Bros.* (One word review: Nintendon't!). Or maybe it was that \$125,000,000 without one decent special effect to show for it. Or maybe it was the fact that it wasn't a very good movie. Whatever the reason, audiences preferred to watch lawyers being unceremoniously eaten off toilets by ill-mannered, sixty-four-ton lizards. *Last Action Hero* became *Last Summer's Bomb*, and the cry went up from sea to sea: *Wait for the video!*

Well, the video is here, and I'm gonna review it.

Last Action Hero (for those who missed the three hundred articles) concerns the adventures of one Danny Madigan (Austin O'Brien), a hyper twelve year old whose life revolves around a love of bad action movies (Sound like anyone you know?). His favourites are a series of Arnie pictures about an L.A. cop named Jack Slater (trademark line: "Big Mistake."). Since Danny is a good friend of an aged film projectionist, he gets invited to a one person sneak preview of the new Slater picture-- but on the night of the preview, Danny gets robbed and handcuffed to a sink. Disobeying a police order, Danny goes straight to the theatre afterwards.

After some confusing idiocy about Houdini, the projectionist's childhood and a big, gold, magic ticket, Danny finally sits down to watch *Jack Slater IV* and... Say it with me!... is accidentally

sucked into the movie!

Partnered with his movie hero, Danny first tries to convince himself that it's not happening. When that fails, he irritates and confuses all the movie characters by trying to convince them that their lives are nothing but thin celluloid projected at twenty-four frames a second. When that fails, he just sits around and has fun surviving explosions, gunfights, eye grenades (!!) and as much death and gore as a PG rating allows (which is quite a bit!).

Then the bad guy gets ahold of the magic ticket stub, escapes into the real world, and havoc ceases to ensue. The last twenty minutes of the movie plod along, with only a few humorous "villain" scenes to alleviate the dank, depressing, predictable nature of reality.

Fortunately there is a big fight scene at the very end, with Slater versus the Ripper and Benedict with only his bare hands, a gun, and ten thousand volts for self defense.

And after a lame happy ending, it's all over, with none of the characters changed or matured or even dead (except those two Bad Guys, of course).

Now, criticizing Arnie's acting talent (or lack thereof) has been a favourite pastime of critics since *Pumping Iron* came out. I'd like to continue that here, and hope I say something original. There's little difference between his performance in *L.A.H.* (those lazy fingers again) and his performance in, say, *Commando*. The major change seems to be that his accent gets thicker as his muscles get smaller. An odd twist on the old Samson myth: instead of strength stored in hair, Arnie stores enunciation in his biceps. He's the same enjoyable lug he's always been, except that the violence has been toned down a bit.

The new kid on the screen, Austin O'Brien, is not so much fun. He seems to embody the worst features of both Eddie Furlong (*Terminator 2*) and Macaulay Culkin: too much the cool, detached, tough-guy-at-twelve that you always want to hit, mixed with the hyper, smirking assuredness of the kid who just *knows* the world can't touch him. Still, O'Brien does manage to get his character across occasionally, and he's really not that bad once you get used to the way the movie works. And since his character ends up as the comedy relief of a "cop buddy" movie, he gets most of the good punchlines.

There is one guy in this flick whose performance is above reproach: Benedict, the Major Villain. He does the B-grade action villain to the hilt, shooting people just for the hell of it and generally being evil. He's not as good as Alan Rickman in *Robin Hood*, but he does keep you entertained.

As for the feel of being "inside" a movie the film succeeds... if only because even real movies aren't this bizarre. The set for the Police Station looks like a set from *Total Recall*. There are beautiful women all over the place and most of them are dressed in tight rubber garments stolen from *The Rocky Horror Picture*



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