

# Arts & Entertainment

## APOCALYPSE NOW FOR HOLLYWOOD?

by Harry Allen

This past summer while travelling through Germany, I had the misfortune of seeing the film "Congo". The film, in case you have not seen it, is about a motley group of researchers, schemers and Defence Department officials who go to Africa in an attempt to return a gorilla to its home. Upon arrival they find the treasures of a past civilization and discover what happened to a group a Defence Department scientist who were searching for some special diamonds that could be used to construct powerful lasers.

This is what I understood to be the plot. I might be wrong, see as how it was all in German. About ten minutes into the movie I realized that this was probably a good thing. The facial expressions and predictability of scenes made apparent the low-calibre of the movie I was seeing. To suffer through predictable and ridiculous dialogue might have been too much. So, after the movie I wondered -- why did this movie get so much hype when it was so awful?

I decided that the problem is with the big movie studios in Hollywood. They need to generate the appearance of talent and, more importantly, household fame for some element of the new release. Since everyone has seen Jurassic Park, and everyone knows that Michael Crichton is the author of the book on which the screenplay was based, why not use this author's fame as the selling point for a popular summer release? I don't think that the quality of movies

would be so awful if it was possible to generate more stars.

Week to week you see the same people gracing the covers of the tabloids, and the same goes for the contents of popular magazines like People. The public can only follow so many stars at once. The small number of legitimate superstars must now work to complete movies as quickly as the public can consume them. This means that there is no time to make an effort at a quality production. For example, Wolf, starring Jack Nicholson and Michelle Pfeiffer, had several different screenwriters. The discontinuity of their ideas is obvious to anyone who's seen it. Certain parts are completely incongruous with other parts and there isn't even the slightest attempt to reconcile these inconsistencies. There simply isn't enough time. These superstars have to be available for the next big release that feeds off their fame. You can be assured that the quality of these yet-to-be-made movies will be as awful as their predecessors -- witness Dangerous Minds. In order to appear as if they are releasing the best new pictures, these producers have to spend incredible amounts of money to provide state of the art special effects. This gives the appearance of greatest available movie quality. My belief is that as technologies become cheaper and the ways of creating fame becomes less centralized you will see independent movies replacing these huge production affairs as the public's choice.

The Secret Of Pirate's Manor  
Story: Eric Suben  
Art: Berth Amoss  
(Andrews and McMeel)

Almost everyone spent at least one childhood afternoon sitting on the kitchen floor with a jigsaw puzzle. Most of us have happy memories of chasing lost pieces behind the fridge or shooing the cat when she sat on the picture looking for attention. Ah, blissful youth! What parent doesn't try to distract their child with one of these fully-interlocking beauties?

That's the kind of market The Secret of Pirate Manor hopes to cash in on. It's a simplistic story about a couple of kids who explore an old pirate's house, suffer a couple of scares, then suddenly find pirate treasure and turn the place into a museum. Yay. The gimmick they hope will sell the book is the two-sided jigsaw puzzle included, which can be pushed out of the front cover and taken apart and then put together again to form a different picture on the inside back cover.

To be kind, the idea of a pull-out jigsaw is kind of neat. It adds a little sense of mystery. But pulling the puzzle out with its pieces intact is

harder than dentistry on a hungry lion and jamming the assembled puzzle back into its die-cut tray requires repeated whackings. This adds an unfortunate edge of violence to the otherwise harmless tale.

Puzzle aside, the story is paper-thin and too insipid to hold the attention of anyone past the age of 3, which defeats the purpose of the sophisticated gimmick. The girl screams at every noise (bad stereotyping). The duo discovers treasure on the very last page and turns the place into a museum -- not too realistic. I know it's only a kid's book, but that's not an excuse: any kid can tell you that finding pirate gold is damn hard work! And while the art tries to be atmospheric by hiding things in the shadows, it's just too crude.

Do your kids a favour. Buy them a Lion King puzzle and a stack of old Beatrix Potter books. They'll have much more fun than they would with this.

--T. Drake

A Teacher Affects Eternity  
Edited by Linda Sunshine  
Andrews and McMeel

Have you ever had a teacher that changed your life? Showed you what you really wanted to be when you grew up? Or just made science class fun? Then I have the book to thank them for it. This book is a tribute to teachers. The small, hard-cover book is filled with thoughts, phrases and personal recollections from all sorts of different people. Albert Einstein to Woody Allan,

Dickens to Churchill, all the major bases are covered. It is full of enough beautiful pictures and thoughts to make a teacher cry. This is a wonderful, wonderful book. If a teacher has ever touched your life get them this book, after all "A teacher affects eternity: he can never tell where his influence stops."

Colleen Easter