

Hollywood Report

Martin A. Grove

Hollywood hope: Hollywood, which took a pounding in 1991 from consumer media that were eager to put it at death's door, received a message of hope at the boxoffice this holiday season that should put it in good spirits as 1992 dawns.

Hollywood's failures and excesses were kept under the media's microscope throughout the year gone by as efforts were made to paint the film industry as one more victim of the recession. Where many of those who sought to analyze Hollywood went wrong was failing to realize that, by and large, the year's disappointing business was being done by the year's disappointing films.

The public did not stop going to the movies in 1991. What it did do was stop going to movies that seemed to offer so little that people could not justify the high cost of seeing them at a time when money is tight. Ironically, it was thanks to the very same newspapers, magazines and television shows that were burying Hollywood that the public was able to determine which films were worth seeing. More than ever before, moviegoers have access to a wide range of information about new films that enables them to make decisions as smart consumers.

Those who saw the failure at the boxoffice of certain films as a sign that people were unwilling or unable to spend on movie tickets missed the point. What they should have seen was the success movies were enjoying that did deliver the entertainment value audiences were demanding for their money.

It's true that last summer was a roller coaster at the box-office and that things didn't fall into place last fall, but the holiday season made some major inroads in reversing that downward trend. For the first time in many months, Hollywood started offering the public films that people really wanted to see. Mostly, there were success stories from mid-November through New Year's, a period when only a handful of holiday releases went directly down the drain.

The success of adult-appeal holiday product — like Columbia's "The Prince of Tides," last weekend's top-grossing adult film and the wide release with the highest per-screen average in the marketplace; TriStar's "Bugsy," which topped the list of Golden Globe nominations with eight and on the strength of that plus a best picture victory with the Los Angeles Film Critics is an Oscar frontrunner; Warner Bros.' controversial "JFK," which received four Golden Globe nominations and stirred up editorial passions more than any other film in recent history; and Buena Vista/Touchstone's "Father of the Bride," a PG-rated comedy targeted to family audiences — suggests there will be stronger January holdover business than seemed likely a month or two ago.

At the same time, the pre-New Year's platform releases of Universal's "Fried Green Tomatoes," which did ripe business at five screens and had outstanding exit poll scores with 95% in the top two boxes (excellent and very good) and 90% definite recommend; and 20th Century Fox's "Grand Canyon," which arrived at two screens to grand business and reviews, could translate into boxoffice health when they go wide this month.

It appears 1991 was a flat year for the film business vs. 1990. But given the state of America's economy, it's hard to think of another business sector that wouldn't be happy to have gotten through 1991 as well as Hollywood did.

TV reviews

'Frost': President, Mrs. Bush

By LAURENCE VITTES

Serving both as a summing up of the year past and a kick-off to 1992's election-year antics, "The President and Mrs. Bush... Talking With David Frost" airs Friday night on KCET. Taped Dec. 23 in the White House, the interview with the Bushes, both separately and jointly, provides less entertainment value than it does material for subtle political pundits.

Looking impressively fit and remarkably poised (little fodder for "Saturday Night Live" parody here), the president takes a calm if corporate middle road on such issues as the recession, the Clarence Thomas nomination and hearings, Gorbachev's fall and the dissolved Soviet empire, civil rights legislation, abortion, the shadows cast by Pat Buchanan and David Duke, and the possibility of an increased peace dividend through decreased defense spending.

There are no big surprises here

'The Extreme Edge'

By RICK SHERWOOD

In your face.

While that approach is the downfall of so many shows, it is the main reason tonight's ABC special, "The Extreme Edge," is able to break out of the reality-based mold and truly stand out from the pack. Rather than merely covering people and daredevil events, this show takes part along with its subjects and as a result makes viewers feel that they are doing the same.

It's not that the segment subjects are that unique or that startling, but rather the way in which they are presented. Thanks to superior camerawork, innovative video techniques and a group of editors who put it all together with impressive stream-of-consciousness excitement, it just has the right feel for a show of this type. Few others can

Film review

'Diary for My Loves'

By JEFF MENELL

NEW YORK — Before making one's diary public one should realize that the content may not be as fascinating to others as it is to ourselves. Marta Meszaros' semiautobiographical "Diary for My Loves" is also semiabsorbing and semi-important. While bordering on near perfection in certain shots, it also borders on tedium in others.

Making its American theatrical premiere at the Public Theater, as part of the Public's "Five From Hun-

THE PRESIDENT AND MRS. BUSH... TALKING WITH DAVID FROST

PBS
David Paradine Television and WETA
Executives in charge of production... Sue Ducat, Ricki Green
Exec. producers... John M. Floresco, David Frost
Producer... Wallace Westfeldt
Coordinating producer... Robert Muller
Field producer... Topper Cook
Associate producers-reporters... Robert Abeshouse, David Wilson
Production coordinator... Elena Brodie-Kusa
Production associate... Carolyn Brakefield
Editor... Bill DeRonde
Airdate: Friday, Jan. 3, 9-10 p.m.

although the president's commitment to reduced defense spending ("With our enormous successes around the world, I think there are ways that we can save more...") seems surprisingly enthusiastic.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Bush, looking trim and rested herself, talks about AIDS ("There's no such thing as safe sex... there may be semisafe sex"), campaigning for her husband, mothers at war, and the difficulties of life as the First Family, but does

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THE EXTREME EDGE

ABC
ABC/Kane Productions International Inc.
Exec. producers... Dennis B. Kane, Steven Borden
Writer-director... Steven Borden
Creators... Tom Caliendo, Steven Borden
Supervising producer... Kim Moses
Segment producers... Steve Durgin, Michel Tabari
Supervising editor... David Small
Music... Tim Truman
Editors... Kathleen Abbott, Jerry Behrens, Robert DeMaio, Joanne McDonough, Jay Segimato, J.W. Cox
Host-narrator: Brian Wimmer
Airdate: Thursday, Jan. 2, 9-10 p.m.

claim the same.

Rather than pumping up the segments with loud soundtracks and cluttering itself with in-studio hosts, so-called correspondents, and the ubiquitous studio audience that has to be told when something is exciting, this show instead allows the activities and the people to speak for

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gary" series, "Diary for My Loves" is a painfully detailed account of a young Hungarian woman's coming of age in Moscow while her fellow countrymen and women prepare for an anti-Soviet revolt.

As a testament to the technical and artistic advances made in Hungarian cinema, Meszaros' film is impressive indeed. Her attention to detail is crisp and focused. "Diary for My Loves" boasts an authentic look at that period as well as giving the

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