

'Smokey' sequel a bit tired, lacks originality

By TIM POPE

IN Hollywood, where cash register bells sound out the melody of success, sequels have become natural and necessary to the film industry. What began as expansions on unfinished plots, sequels are now nothing more than hit-and-miss shots at reincarnated financial success.

But sequels rarely become anything more than a tired rehash of better times. The few exceptions—*Codfather II*, and *The Empire Strikes Back* among them—work because they creatively illuminated an already intriguing story. The latest in this mold, Hal Needham's *Smokey and the Bandit II*, fails because it's merely the original redone in a sappy, sentimental style.

In *Smokey II*, it seems, the producers have stumbled onto a new recipe for filmmaking: take one slightly revised script of a very successful film, stir in more characters, such as a wacko Italian doctor and a teary-eyed elephant, for flavor; season with an excitement-minded director and reshoot the entire film in Florida.

However, the producers forgot an important step in cooking up a successful sequel. They forgot to blend in some freshness and spontaneity. The lack of these two ingredients spoils *Smokey and the Bandit II*.

The original *Smokey and the Bandit* was successful because it was unpretentious.

The good ol' boys vs. the dumb cops story line was spiced with cornball humor just to the right of *Hee Haw*. The writers (Jerry Belson and Brock Yates) began *Part Two* with a nearly identical plot. The same wedding between Carrie (Sally Field) and Sheriff Buford T. Justice's (Jackie Gleason)

marvelously stereotyped as the country sheriff whose blood boils at the very sight of the Bandits. Gleason's comic ability peaks when he has a close encounter with a zipper at a country gas station.

Both Reynolds and Field appear more determined to iron out their personal problems than to be making a good comedy. They recite their lines at times with such lack of enthusiasm that the audience wonders if the bloopers shown at the film's end should have been featured instead of what was.

In fact, as the film progresses the audience begins to do a lot of wondering.

Viewers probably wonder when this movie, which has so much promise will stop spinning its wheels on crummy gags seen before.

It never happens. *Smokey and the Bandit II* has too much of its parent in its blood to be original. But its difference from the original—its lack of sheer giddiness—is the thing it so desperately needs.

Tim Pope is a staff writer for *The Daily Tar Heel*.

Movies

inept son is once again disbanded so that she may join the Bandit (Burt Reynolds).

This premise, along with a flimsy excuse for a three-day car chase from Miami to Texas is the basic plot.

The quick-paced, run-em-down excitement that prevailed the original is absent. Stuntman-turned-director Hal Needham abandons his field of expertise to dwell on some corny romanticism. Field lectures Reynolds on basic human decency. Gone is the sharp, high-powered humor of the original. In its place are one-liners and visual gags that border on TV mundaneness—especially the time given to a statement on the prevention of cruelty to elephants.

But the film is not totally devoid of excitement and humor. There is at least one good chase involving several dozen diesels and squad cars in the middle of the desert. And Jackie Gleason remains



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