

Future festive flicks include possible Oscar contenders

By RICHARD SMITH
and JAMES DEAN
Staff Writers

In case you were a little disillusioned by the lack of good stuff around at the movies recently, especially after the disappointing Thanksgiving crop, we thought we'd give you the run-down on the films scheduled for this Christmas to whet your appetite.

All films that want to be considered for Oscars next year have to be released for a whole week before the end of this year. Here are some of the likely contenders, which are creeping in just before that deadline.

Talk Radio Oliver Stone's follow-up to "Platoon" and "Wall Street" is about a controversial radio talk-show host who is threatened by a radical group of right-wing extremists. The film is actually adapted from a book by Stephen Singular and a play by Eric Bogosian. Bogosian himself takes the lead role and is supported by Ellen Greene ("Little Shop of Horrors").

Rain Man Martin Brest ("Beverly Hills Cop"), Sydney Pollack ("Out of Africa") and Steven Spielberg were all at one stage scheduled to direct this script which heralds Dustin Hoffman's long-awaited return (we're deliberately ignoring "Ishtar") to the screen. Also starring current sure thing Tom Cruise, the film was finally given to Barry Levinson ("Diner," "Good Morning, Vietnam"). Hoffman plays an autistic idiot savant with a photographic memory who's given a family inheritance. Cruise plays his con-man brother, intent on getting hold of the money for himself.

Mississippi Burning Deep South, 1964, is the setting for this story of two FBI agents (Gene Hackman and Willem Dafoe) searching for three missing civil-rights workers. Shot on location in Jackson, Miss., and LaFayette, Ala., the film employed local actors and technicians, many of whom were around for the real events of the story. The film's name is taken from the actual FBI file on

the case. Directed by Alan Parker, of "Birdy" and "Angel Heart" fame.

The Accidental Tourist William Hurt and Kathleen Turner team up again with director Lawrence Kasden — all of whom worked on the terrific "Body Heat" — in this adaptation of Ann Tyler's novel of the same name. They play a couple so devastated by the loss of their son that she leaves, and he has to start a new life, which he does with the help of a spirited dog trainer, played by Geena Davis ("The Fly").

A Cry in the Dark In her first film since "Ironweed," Meryl Streep recreates the true story of Lindy Chamberlain, the Australian woman who received unwanted fame when her baby went missing. She claimed that it had been taken by a dingo (an Australian wild dog), but the Australian Press vehemently opposed her story, saying that she murdered the baby. Also starring Sam Neill, and directed by Fred Schepisi, all of whom last worked together in the excellent "Plenty."



Dan Ackroyd and Kim Basinger star in the new comedy release, "My Stepmother is an Alien."

There are also some blockbuster comedies on the way, including:

Twins Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito play a set of scientifically created twins who

were separated at birth and get together on a quest to find their mother — apparently the only

See HOLIDAY FLICKS page 11

Round out your holiday wish list with these five albums

By DOUG EDMUNDS
Staff Writer

Albums to put on your Holiday Wish List

Faced with the predicament of having to choose one record out of a possible half dozen or so choice discs for my last review of the semester, I decided instead to compile a list of prime vinyl for your holiday gift-giving/receiving

pleasure. The following LPs represent only a small sample of the cool sounds released over the past few months, but I found myself enjoying these records in particular. In addition, I've been way too poor to buy some stuff I would have loved to review, so the list is smaller than I'd prefer. Anyway, I hope you all spend plenty of time in your favorite record store over

the break and are hip enough to check out one or more of these platters.

Dinosaur Jr. — Bug

Since I'm not a big fan of the "we're sloppy as hell, can't sing that well, but sure can play loud" school of alternative music, (which does not, by the way, include those masters of the loose feel, The Replacements), this one came as a pleasant surprise. Dinosaur Jr.'s earlier efforts didn't strike me as much as this one, and I think the difference lies, quite simply, in the songs. On *Bug* you find good melodies, interesting chord progressions and some great lyrics in addition to the normal doses of loudness and dissonance. This album rocks hard and heavy, but it doesn't sound like one long aural attack where all the songs become indistinguishable from each other. "Freak Scene" shows the group at its best and is even more ear-catching than its funny cover version of Peter Frampton's "Show Me the Way," from the band's last EP. The last cut on the record is the best primal scream/rip-your-guts-out-through-your-spine tune I've heard in ages. And you were beginning to think only my comrade reviewer, Mr. Bullock, liked that kind of thing!

Keith Richards — Talk Is Cheap

Indeed it is, music lovers, but when a record talks with this much energy and class it deserves a listen — or two or three. You may not think of this ancient

Rolling Stone as part of the alternative scene, but this excellent solo debut is certainly a fresh, welcome alternative to much of the sugar-coated shlock polluting today's airwaves. Keith and his band of ace session musicians, including former David Letterman drummer Steve Jordan and versatile guitarist Waddy Wachtel, play with spirited abandon and manage to achieve a kind of musical tightness just by staying loose. The album mixes rock, soul, funk and R&B to form a collection of memorable tunes that the ragged-voiced Richards sings with surprising dexterity. Rolling Stone or not, Richards has made an LP that stands on its own as an exciting, well-crafted piece of work.

Lloyd Cole and the Commotions — Mainstream

In a fairer world, music this good would be mainstream. Unfortunately for Lloyd and us, his American record label didn't think this was even good enough for the non-mainstream, and, after more than a year's delay and a change in labels, his third domestic release finally became available this fall. If you like guitar-based pop with great hooks, thoughtful arrangements, unique vocals and intelligent, clever lyrics, this is an essential purchase. I suppose that description could apply to a lot of groups, such as The Smiths or Echo and the Bunnymen, but Cole and friends have created a distinctly original sound and a 10-song album with not one bad number. How

could anyone resist the biting wit of "Sean Penn Blues" or the fast-talking hipness of the opener, "My Bag"? Do yourself a favor, do the band a favor, buy this record.

The Waterboys — Fisherman's Blues

Last, but not necessarily least, on my abbreviated list of recommended vinyl, (and I do mean vinyl for all of you brainwashed, digital masses) is this fourth release by the underrated, overlooked Waterboys. Known for frontman Mike Scott's passionate vocals and his lyrics' grand poetic imagery, the group seems to be in a quieter, more traditional mood here. By traditional I mean Celtic folk music, which pervades the record throughout. While these songs are not as uplifting or musically compelling as most previous compositions, Scott still expresses his visions and thoughts skillfully and sincerely with obvious references to one of his biggest influences, Van Morrison. There are, however, a few numbers that recall the majestic "Big Music" of the band's past, especially the stirring "We Will Not Be Lovers." This is the kind of record that's perfect for listening to by a warm fire on a cold, damp winter afternoon. Don't ask me why.

So there you have it, some helpful suggestions for the holiday shopping binge. I hope all you plastic fantastic lovers check out at least one of these titles. Chances are you'll like what you hear, and, if not, well — it's Christmas. You can always return it.

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