

TOP TEN FILMS

Figures indicate total gross

1. **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles**
\$51.0 million, 2 weeks
2. **Pretty Woman**
\$44.3 million, 3 weeks
3. **Ernest Goes to Jail**
\$6.1 million, 1 week
4. **The First Power**
\$5.7 million, 1 week
5. **The Hunt for Red October**
\$83.6 million, 6 weeks
6. **I Love You to Death**
\$4.0 million, 1 week
7. **Driving Miss Daisy**
\$3.2 million, 17 weeks
8. **Cry Baby**
\$3.0 million, 1 week
9. **Opportunity Knocks**
\$6.4 million, 2 weeks
10. **Joe vs. the Volcano**
\$33.0 million, 5 weeks

As Waters loses touch, Depp shines

Cry-Baby

Johnny Depp, Traci Lords,
and Ricki Lake

directed by John Waters

Ram Triple
967-8284
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Cry-Baby isn't subtitled "Johnny Depp moves up and John Waters sells out," but it could be. Johnny Depp, a Sassy magazine coverboy who began his career as a teen detective on Fox's *21 Jump Street*, acts and lipsyncs his way across the silver screen as Cry-Baby, a sensitive, pretty greaser. The role is obviously not a real acting stretch for young Depp. The audience believes Johnny is a hip, good-looking teenager. Not too bad for a 27-year-old, eh?

TOM PARKS Movies

But *Cry-Baby* won't be remembered as Depp's movie no matter how many teenie-boppers flock to suburban malls to pay homage to the rising star. No, *Cry-Baby* will be remembered as the swan song of a brilliant, caustic director who sold out.

John Waters, known for his classic on-screen flights into the campy, the homoerotic and the truly weird, has definitely made a hip movie. But Waters' latest effort lacks the dangerous edge that his early work was so rightly praised for. *Hairspray* was not a fluke; Waters is obviously courting mass appeal, and the man is willing to lose his edge to do it. *Cry-Baby* could almost be shown on television, for crying out loud.

Waters made his reputation with films like *Female Trouble* (or was it *Female Troubles*? Who can remember the '70's, anyway?), *Desperate Living*

and *Mondo Trasho*. These were wacky films made by wacky people for a wacky time. Well, those wacky times are no more.

Waters was apparently so concerned with making *Cry-Baby* hip with cute kids, cool cars and campy women that he neglected the substance.

Johnny — Waters, that is — we hardly knew ye.

But it wouldn't be fair to judge *Cry-Baby* only by Waters' early work. The movie is a giant step back for its director, but compared to the pabulum Hollywood puts out on a regular basis, *Cry-Baby* rocks and rolls all over the screen.

Plus, this is probably the only chance most young kids will have to legally see porn star Traci Lords act. She plays a tough chick (another big stretch) in Johnny Depp's gang/rock-a-billy combo. Depp's "band," by the way, needn't have even brought instruments on stage for the big song and dance numbers. Actors who play musicians should learn to play the instruments at least well enough to

fake it. If Dennis Quaid can do it, anybody can.

The movie's plot centers around — you guessed it — Depp, an orphan born bad. *Cry-Baby's* parents were sent to the electric chair and fried when he was just a lad, hence his great sorrow.

So Johnny sets out to avenge their deaths by falling in love with a high-society babe and actually riding in a car driven by Iggy Pop. I'd sooner let Capt. Hazelwood fly me across the country in an Apache helicopter.

Depp, of course, isn't the movie's real star, which is obvious to anyone in the know. It isn't Lords either, although she's a contender.

The real draw is Iggy. Anyone who can survive that much heroin and still act should be declared a national treasure. In any sane universe, Pop would be dead, but this is not a sane world.

Iggy's still alive and kicking, albeit very skinny and step slow. But he's still as pretty as he ever was — and seeing Pop in his birthday suit is worth the price of admission.

Definitely, undeniably absurd

Ernest Goes To Jail

Jim Varney

directed by John Cherry

Plaza
967-4737
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There isn't much chance that *Ernest Goes To Jail* will be nominated for any Academy Awards next year. Jim Varney won't receive any prestigious acting awards from film festivals in faraway Mediterranean paradises like Cannes. Of course, this movie isn't supposed to do any of these things. *Ernest Goes To Jail* is supposed to be so silly and so absurd that the audience can't keep from laughing. It is definitely silly and undeniably absurd, and this reviewer laughed a lot more than he'd like to admit.

When it comes to movies like *Ernest Goes To Jail*, most reviewers are harshly critical. They look for serious acting and complicated plots. *Ernest Goes To Jail* doesn't take itself seriously, and the audience is making a mistake if they take it seriously. A movie should be judged on its own merit and for the things it's trying to accomplish. Ernest is trying to do anything and everything, no matter how stupid or ridiculous, to get laughs. It's not Shakespearean theater, but if you suspend your criticism for a while, it'll probably make you laugh.

Jim Varney has turned his portrayal of country bumpkin Ernest into an art form. He has played the con-

ALAN WOODLEIF Movies

fused, lovable buffoon in so many commercials and other Ernest movies (*Ernest Goes To Camp*, *Ernest Saves Christmas*) that the actor is indistinguishable from the character. His facial expressions and body movements bring to mind the funniest moments of all those old Jerry Lewis movies. His slow, Southern drawl is so exaggerated and monotone that it is hilarious. Who can resist laughing when Ernest utters his most famous line, "Ya' know — Vern?"

Still, *Ernest Goes To Jail* isn't just a collection of sight gags and one-liners. Director John Cherry has actually given this film a little bit of plot — a simple plot, but it's better than none at all. The film starts with Ernest working as a humble janitor at a local bank. His life is simple and mundane. The pinnacle — so far — is being selected for jury duty the next week.

The prisoner being tried that particular week spots Ernest and notices his uncanny resemblance to a Mr. Nash, a jailed friend of the prisoner. It is obvious what is going to happen next. For some reason, at the prisoner's request, the judge agrees to have the trial moved to the prison. When Ernest arrives, he is jumped by the twin double and his henchman (Randall "Tex" Cobb). Ernest is left to waste away in jail, while his look-alike assumes his identity.

What seems like a basic plot twist turns out to have some pleasant surprises. Of course, Mr. Nash sets his sights on the vaults at Ernest's bank.

The funny thing is that Ernest has to assume Mr. Nash's identity, too. Nash's henchmen make sure that he plays the part. He has to be the big boss around the cell block so that no one will suspect that he's not really Mr. Nash. It is outrageous watching Ernest try imitation after imitation, attempting to sound like every tough guy in movie history, from Humphrey Bogart to Sylvester Stallone.

Varney does a good job with his dual role. His Mr. Nash is tough enough to be believable, but remains a comic foil throughout the film. No bank robber that looks like Ernest P. Worrel is going to be completely sane, or successful. Some of the film's funniest moments come at the expense of the "serious" and ruthless Mr. Nash.

While *Ernest Goes To Jail* has more going for it than just sight gags, there are still plenty of those too. Scenes that have Ernest magnetized and attracting all the metal objects in the room are particularly funny. Seeing him "chased" by file cabinets is hilarious. His automatic toothbrushing machine and his washing machine-for-people are also comical.

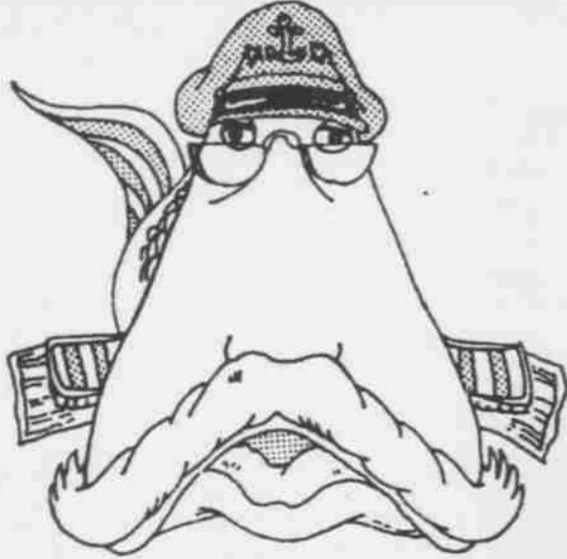
There aren't a lot of bad things to say about *Ernest Goes To Jail*. It was enjoyable and easy to take, which is difficult to say about a lot of movies. It was full of funny moments and genuine good laughs. A lot of people wouldn't enjoy it, because they wouldn't take it at face value and would expect too much from it.

If you go see *Ernest Goes To Jail*, don't expect anything but the ridiculous. And if ridiculous isn't what you want, then don't go see it. Go see *Ernest Goes To Jail* if you're in the mood for a lot of nonsense and lots of laughs.

CINEPLEX ODEON THEATRES
CAROLINA
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Cry Baby (PG-13)
7:30 9:30
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (PG)
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