

# Just for Variety

By ARMY ARCHERD

**GOOD MORNING:** Paul Newman has not forsaken the sound stage for the racetracks — he is committed to working with Martin Scorsese on developing "The Color Of Money," to start, it's hoped, before year's end . . . And Robert Redford, receding after "Out Of Africa" thesping, is only thinking about a return next time out as a director, either "Milagro Bean Fields," which David Ward is writing, or "Sweet Sir." He would not appear in either . . . "It's an arena beyond 'Dynasty' or 'Dallas' — it's 'Palm Beach,'" says George Englund, who is writing the two-four-hour CBS vidpic based on the life and times of Gregg Sherwood Dodge. She also helped liven up the Sunset Strip in the days of the Mocambo and Ciro's. Englund himself got in the sultry, sexy swim of Palm Beach when he was starting out in the biz, running a small legit down there. Englund's currently holed up in torrid Palm Springs completing the script, having just wound "Kenya Safari Rally" for NBC . . . Yvette Mimieux, back here this week after D.C.-filming the first of her recurring stands in "Lime Street," says the difference between "recurring" and "regular" roles is "freedom — the best of all worlds." She'll be in six segs of the new R.J. Wagner series. When she read the script, her role was described as "an Yvette Mimieux type." She's playing a jet-set, jet test pilot who, of course, has a romantic relationship with R.J. The "freedom" permits Mimieux to pursue her pic/tv production plans, which include a bigscreen rock 'n roll musical "for young people," "Jump Start" . . . Proud mama dept.: Carol Burnett's beaming because daughter Carrie (Hamilton) will appear in seven segs of "Fame." Carrie received terrific reviews for her "Member Of The Wedding" Summerstocking. Burnett, working on the polish of her autobiog, says she'll be busy on cameras next year with two bigscreen features, two vidspex including an ABC variety show.

"Sweet Liberty" producer Martin Bregman wrapartied the adult troupe headed by Alan Alda, Michael Caine, Michelle Pfeiffer, etc., and says he's confident "by the time we come out (late next Spring or early Summer), kids will have had their fill of this Summer's (kid) fare. Films that reflect our culture should be made, otherwise entertainment becomes nothing more than escapism." "Liberty" is an "out-and-out contemporary comedy with real people. And," he reminds, "don't forget that Alan Alda has a huge following with young audiences — who watch him regularly on 'MASH' reruns." Bregman's readying "The Shadow" to be directed by Bob Zemeckis and "Home Again" with Amy Heckerling directing. They reined this Summer's kidpix hits, "Back To The Future" and "European Vacation" . . . Stirling Silliphant sold his luxury yacht and home in San-Fran — he's too busy here writing the next Stallone starrer, "Over The Top," a six-hour "L.A." mini for NBC and his third John Locke adventure novel, "Silver Star" . . . Harry and Michael Medved's next "bad movies" book is titled, "Son Of Golden Turkey Awards." It follows in the footsteps of "The 50 Worst Films Of All Time," "Hollywood Hall Of Shame" and, of course, "Golden Turkey Awards." Villard Books (Random House) publishes here and Angus & Robertson for British flop film fans. Artie and Richard Pine set the deals.

Ace commercial director Bob Giraldi (he did the Michael Jackson Pepsi blurb) is prepping a cassette on the late James Dean with Chelsea Communications, David Dalton scripting . . . Continuing its series on Hollywood "Immortals," the current Paris Match yarn on Bogart features pix by Hollywood ace lensers Phil Stern and Sid Avery. They are founders of the Hollywood Photographers' Archives . . . Gene Lester, at Ah Fong's, said he's readying a PBS spec, "The Machines That Froze History," with still pix from the Civil War to moon-walk pix by astronaut Peter Conrad of Apollo XII . . . After spending the past few years in Palm Springs, Clyde Wallich, who headed Music City for 30 years, is back in town with his own Business and Financial Consultancy. He's also talking a board position with Capitol Records, which his brother Glen founded . . . Ex-stuntman John Carpenter is celebrating the 45th year running his "Heaven On Earth Ranch" — "free forever to the handicapped" . . . Patti Page and Eddie Fisher team at the Westbury Music Fair, Aug. 27.



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Founded 1933 by Sime Silverman  
Syd Silverman, President

DAILY VARIETY (ISSN 0011-5509) is published Daily except Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays, with a special edition the last week of October, for \$80 per year by DAILY VARIETY Ltd., 1400 N. Cahuenga Blvd., Hollywood, California 90028. Telephone # (213) 469-1141. Telex # 674-281, cable, DAVAR, HOLLYWOOD. Second class postage paid at Los Angeles, California, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGE TO, DAILY VARIETY, 1400 N. CAHUENGA BLVD., HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA 90028.

Vol. 208 No. 47

Aug. 12, 1985

(c) 533

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## FILM REVIEWS

### American Flyers (Sports drama—Panavision —Technicolor)

A Warner Bros. release. Produced by Gareth Wigan, Paula Weinstein. Directed by John Badham. Screenplay by Steve Tesich. Camera (Technicolor—Panavision), Don Peterman; editor, Frank Morris; music, Lee Ritenour, Greg Mathieson; production designer, Lawrence G. Paull; set decorator, Garrett Lewis; set designer, Joseph Nemec III; sound (Dolby), Willie Burton; costumes, Marianna Elliott; assistant director, Jerry Ziesmer; associate producer, Gregg Champion. Reviewed at Samuel Goldwyn Theater, Beverly Hills, July 25, 1985. MPAA rating: PG-13. Running time: 114 min.

Marcus	Kevin Costner
David	David Grant
Sarah	Rae Dawn Chong
Becky	Alexandra Paul
Mrs. Sommers	Janice Rule
Muzzin	Luca Bercovici
Jerome	Robert Townsend
Dr. Conrad	John Amos

Story of two brothers who untangle their mixed emotions as they compete in a grueling bicycle race, "American Flyers" is most entertaining when it rolls along unencumbered by big statements. Unfortunately, overblown production just pumps hot air in too many directions and comes up limp. Boxoffice appeal is limited, even with biking aficionados likely to find the action unauthentic.

Everything, from whirling aerial cameras tracking the race to overheated family strife and Panavision lensing, attempts to give more import to events than the film can hold.

Although scripter Steven Tesich hit the bull's-eye with the bicycling set "Breaking Away," "American Flyers" is off-center and poorly structured, displaying only an occasional deft touch. Director John Badham does little to tie the numerous loose strands together.

Basic conflict between under-achiever David (David Grant) and older brother Marcus (Kevin Costner), a fierce competitor and non-nonsense sports doctor, is crammed into a hotbed of family problems including a career-woman mother (Janice Rule) who emotionally abandoned her dying husband.

If this isn't enough, one of the boys is destined for the same fate as the father. So, with the shadow of death hanging over them, the brothers set off for Colorado for "the toughest bicycle race in America."

Troupe is joined by Marcus' girlfriend, Sarah (Rae Dawn Chong), and a hitchhiker (Alexandra Paul) who becomes David's girl and, immediately, fast friends with the group.

Combateness between brothers yields to camaraderie, but true nature of their conflict is difficult to get a handle on. David's reactions are often inexplicably hostile. He's not just a quirky character, he's a crank. Characters emote freely with no underpinnings for their feelings.

Women are hopelessly underwritten as well, with little more to do than stand around and cheer their men. Mother is also a mystery and one more cog in a not-very-well-oiled machine.

Bicycles, however, run smoothly, and race sequences are the strongest part of the film as cyclists climb scenic Rocky Mountain slopes. But even here, production resorts to cliches by portraying the Russian champion as a stereotypical thick-waisted and thick-witted Soviet. Also contributing to the contrived atmosphere are a series of glaring commercial product tie-ins.

Performances are adequate considering that overproduction makes the characters seem larger than life without being life-like. *Jagr.*

### Volunteers (Comedy — Metrocolor)

A Tri-Star release of an HBO presentation in association with Silver Screen Partners. Produced by Richard Shepherd, Walter F. Parkes. Directed by Nicholas Meyer. Screenplay, Ken Levine, David Isaacs. Story by Keith Critchlow. Camera (Metrocolor), Ric Waite; editors, Ronald Roose, Steven Polivka; music, James Horner; production design, James Schoppe; art direction, Jose Rodriguez Granada; set design, Arturo Brito; sound (Dolby), Claude Hitchcock; special effects coordinator, Raul Esquivel; associate producer, Theodore R. Parvin; assistant directors, Elie Cohn, Jesus Marin (Mexico); additional photography, Jack Green; casting, Joyce Robinson, Penny Eilers. Reviewed at the Picwood, L.A., Aug. 5, 1985. MPAA rating: R. Running time: 106 min.

Lawrence Bourne III	Tom Hanks
Tom Tuttle from Tacoma	John Candy
Beth Wexler	Rita Wilson
John Reynolds	Tim Thomerson
At Toon	Gedde Watanabe
Lawrence Bourne Jr.	George Plimpton
Chung Mee	Ernest Harada

"Volunteers" is a very broad and mostly flat comedy about hijinx in the Peace Corps, circa 1962. Toplined Tom Hanks gets in a few good zingers as an upper-class snob doing time in Thailand, but promising premise and opening shortly descend into unduly protracted tedium. Pic will probably be an immediate candidate for foreign aid at the b.o.

Hanks plays Lawrence Bourne III, an arrogant, snide rich boy from Yale who trades places with an earnest Peace Corps designate when his enormous gambling debts land him in danger at home.

The sight of this snooty fellow, who arrives in Asia wearing a white dinner jacket amidst a planeload of hootenanny naive liberals is good for a few yocks, as are some of his insolent, nasty cracks made in the direction of cohort Rita Wilson and anyone else he finds underfoot.

Once ensconced in a remote village, the contentious couple and ultra do-gooder John Candy set out to build a bridge across a river.

Kidnapped and brainwashed by the commies, the gung-ho Candy disappears from the scene for a long stretch. By the time he returns, both the guerrillas and some fierce black marketers have plans of their own for the bridge.

With Candy absent most of the time, Hanks' one-note, if sometimes clever, attitudinizing wears out its welcome after awhile. He is also deprived of anyone effective to play off of, since newcomer Wilson fails to register and everyone else is the most exaggerated of caricatures.

Lensed in Mexico, pic features a muddy, truly ugly look that puts a damper on the proceedings from the outset.

Also present is undoubtedly the most offensively blatant plug for Coca-Cola yet seen in the new era of Coke-owned entertainment companies. Sequence in which Hanks gets Wilson to stay with him by offering her that rarest of jungle commodities — a Coke — could play unaltered as a tv commercial. *Cart.*

### Juilliard Taps Wager Communications Chief

Walter Wager has been named director of communications for the Juilliard School. He previously was director of public relations for American Society of Composers, Authors & Publishers.

Wager has written 26 books, including "Telefon," made into an MGM film with Charles Bronson and Lee Remick.

His most recent novel is "Otto's Boy," published by Macmillan.

### My Science Project (Youth comedy—Technicolor)

A Buena Vista release of a Touchstone Films presentation. Produced by Jonathan Taplin. Directed by Jonathan Betuel. Screenplay by Betuel. Camera (Technicolor), David M. Walsh; editor, C. Timothy O'Meara; music, Peter Bernstein; production design, David L. Snyder; set decorator, Jerry Wunderlich; art director, John B. Mansbridge; visual effects supervisor, John Scheele; assistant director, Jerry Sobul; sound, Jim Webb; associate producer, E. Darrell Hallenbeck; casting, Bill Shepard. Reviewed at Egyptian Theater, Hollywood, Aug. 9, 1985. MPAA Rating: PG. Running time: 94 min.

Michael Harlan	John Stockwell
Ellie Sawyer	Danielle Von Zerneck
Vince Latello	Fisher Stevens
Sherman	Raphael Sbarge
Bob Roberts	Dennis Hopper
Lew Harlan	Barry Corbin
Dolores	Ann Wedgeworth
Detective Nulty	Richard Masur

Dennis Hopper has been seen in a lot of weird situations, but who would have expected to see him passing through a time warp riding to "the headwaters of creation." Such is the business of "My Science Project," and though it may not have much of a story, it is probably the funniest of the three Summer "science" films, thanks to comic turns by Hopper and Fisher Stevens as a Brooklyn-born grease monkey. If audiences can distinguish it from the other test-tube babies, it could have a decent run at the boxoffice.

"My Science Project," along with "Weird Science" and "Real Genius," would have done well to use its intelligence to cure the Summer disease plaguing Hollywood — lack of story.

Though the films are not really similar, they share a reliance on a manufactured high-tech plot as a pretext to the usual hijinx. Of the three, "My Science Project" is most dependent on its premise, with little else on its mind.

Picture plays a bit like "Life-force" as a comedy, with young Michael Harlan (John Stockwell) pillaging a military junkyard to come up with his high school science project, a superpower thrusting able to break the space and time barrier.

It all plays like an excuse for some not-so-fancy special effects and the film's finale in the high school, where a cast including Cleopatra, a Neanderthal man, Nazi soldiers, Godzilla and gladiators collect in battle.

Although there is little compelling about the action, luckily there is Harlan's sidekick Vince Latello (Fisher Stevens) to keep the proceedings lively with a steady stream of one-liners.

Vince's car is lit up like a Christmas tree, and he's the kind of guy who refers to school as a brain press, sits in class with sunglasses and a cigar and has a wisecrack for every occasion.

Director Jonathan Betuel, who also wrote the script, seems to lavish most of his attention and best lines on Vince. Elsewhere script falls flat and romance between Harlan and fox in nerd's clothes (Danielle Von Zerneck) generates nary a spark despite all the pyrotechnics going off around them.

In his first mainstream role in years, there is something irresistible about Hopper as the hippie science teacher, complete with VW van and Country Joe tapes, who tries to crack the mystery of the machine and winds up taking a cosmic ride.

His return is equally spectacular as he arrives in fringe jacket and cowboy hat looking like he just stepped out of a time warp. (Continued on Page 15 Column 2)