

Young Guns shoots to top

HOLLYWOOD (AP) — The western shoot-'em-up Young Guns, featuring the offspring of famous movie veterans, topped the weekly U.S. box-office tally, and the controversy surrounding The Last Temptation of Christ proved irresistible.

Young Guns, featuring Martin Sheen's sons Charlie Sheen and Emilio Estevez and Donald Sutherland's son Kiefer, was No. 1 in its first week with a \$7-million US take, ending the two-week box office reign of Cock-tail.

Cocktail, a love story with a twist, starring top-gun bartender Tom Cruise, dropped to second with \$6.2 million, followed by Die Hard in third, A Fish Called Wanda in fourth and Who Framed Roger Rabbit in fifth.

Tucker: The Man and His Dream, which opened Friday on 720 screens — about one-half the number of screens showing Young Guns — was sixth in the box office sweepstakes with a \$3.7-million take.

The controversy around The Last Temptation of Christ, a fictional account on the life of Jesus that some Christians have called blasphemous, was a box-office bonanza for Universal.

The movie played to sold-out crowds in seven U.S. cities and two in Canada, taking in an average \$44,579 a screen for a three-day total of \$401,211.

Endings more than Dickens imagined

OTTAWA (CP) — Even Charles Dickens, who got paid by the word, would have paled at the prospect of creating 700 endings to his unfinished novel The Mystery of Edwin Drood.

And playwright Rupert Holmes, whose musical Drood! is touring North America, admits he wouldn't want to face the task again.

"It was the hardest I've ever worked and it was the most fun I've ever had, creatively that is," said Holmes, a prolific composer and singer known for his songs Him, The Pina Colada Song and You Got It All.

Drood! is his first musical. It swept the Tony awards after it opened on Broadway in 1985.

It's a play-within-a-play about an 1890s British music hall troupe staging The Mystery of Edwin Drood. When the cast comes to the end of what Dickens wrote — he died in 1869 before he finished it — they turn to the audience to finish the story.

Audiences in Ottawa got a chance last week, as Torontonians will this week in the only other Canadian stop, to vote on who the mysterious detective is, who the two lovers are and who killed Edwin Drood.

There are nine murderers' confessions, five detectives' scenarios and 36 combinations of lovers — all with different scripts and songs.

"Someone worked it out who did probability and statistics and said there are over 700 different combinations possible," Holmes said in a telephone interview from New York.

Even after three years, there are endings he hasn't seen yet.

"I still have this nightmare that some night there's going to be some ending I didn't take into account and I'm going to be watching and the cast will say 'Rupert's in row seven.'"

Some characters get picked as the murderer more often than others. Since Jean Stapleton, best known as Edith Bunker on the television sitcom All in the Family, began playing the opium-pushing prostitute Princess Puffer, she's very rarely been chosen.

"She's so lovable that no one can envision her being a murderer, but that's one of my favorite confessions," Holmes said.

And yes, the cast does scrupulously follow how the audience votes, if only for their own sake, he said. Most performers go on automatic pilot after they've been doing a show for months. But with Drood!, they never know whether they're going to be a hero, a villain or a lover that night.

"Sometimes, if you're not chosen for a month or so, you get out of practice and suddenly you're chosen."

Holmes said the actors and actresses compete to see who will be picked as murderer. During the Broadway run, the character Helena Landless, a mysterious woman from Ceylon, suddenly began to be chosen every night. The producers were scratching their heads until they discovered she was slipping the carving knife up her sleeve during the dinner scene.

BOOK CHRONICLES HARDSHIPS

Arctic oil quest a long one

by STEVE MERTL
The Canadian Press

The lure of the Canadian North has historically had two common meanings: a magnet for rugged individualists, and a black hole sucking in millions of Canadian tax dollars for a dream of an Arctic empire.

In the new book Quest, journalist Tom Kennedy describes one company's two-decade push for riches beneath the frozen Arctic Islands and the ice-bound sea.

The book gives some idea of the attraction the region has held for Canada, but don't look for the big picture here. This somewhat jumbled chronicle isn't a primer on the North for the uninitiated.

Kennedy, a veteran Calgary energy writer who knows the players and has seen the places he describes, charts the fitful rise of Panarctic Oils Ltd.

Despite its pretensions, the Calgary-based company never rose much beyond a wildcatting exploration company and never rivalled that other darling of the North, Dome Petroleum Ltd., because it had no production base outside the Arctic.

Yet for several years Panarctic was the dominant presence in the eastern Arctic.

Co-founders Eric Connelly and Cam Sproule, and later president Charles Hetherington, spent much of their time prying exploration capital out of international investors, but they were unable to produce a commercially successful oil or gas well.

Lavish junkets to Panarctic's northern drilling sites were laid on to impress politicians, prospective investors and favored journalists.

But woe betide the uninvited — especially women, whose presence at company facilities in the North was a sore point with Hetherington, Kennedy says.

He describes how an enterprising newspaper reporter named Pat Carney wangled her way uninvited to one of Panarctic's well sites —

only to be confined in a supervisor's quarters on Hetherington's orders until the next flight out.

Carney apparently didn't hold the episode against Panarctic when years later, as federal energy minister, she supported the company's only real oil shipment in 1985.

Hetherington even managed to turn disaster into a public relations bonanza when an exploration well on King Christian Island blew out in 1970, Panarctic's second blowout in as many strikes in the environmentally sensitive region.

During the months it took to tame the wild gas well, Hetherington brought a procession of awed visitors to see the screaming, flaming torch, which was visible for more than 160 kilometres. The 80-metre-high flare was potent evidence for Panarctic's argument that the Arctic islands were the future of Canada's energy industry.

Like their better known contemporaries and sometime rivals — Dome's (Smilin') Jack Gallagher and Bill Richards — Sproule and Hetherington had a genius for winning lucrative tax breaks from Ottawa.

By the mid-1970s, taxpayers wound up paying sometimes more than 100 per cent of the cost of the expensive Arctic wells, a practice justified by dire predictions that the world was running out of oil and gas.

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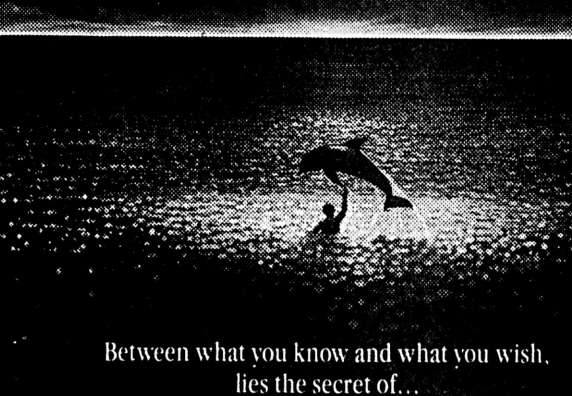
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Schemes were hatched for massive pipelines to the top of the world, or a system of ice-breaking tankers or even giant submarines to get the oil to southern markets.

The energy industry is still waiting for the payoff on Arctic exploration. Panarctic spent nearly \$1 billion, and saw only one trial shipment of oil from its Bent Horn well on Cameron Island in 1985.

A major shortcoming of Quest is that Kennedy doesn't let the principals speak in their own words. And much of the narrative will appeal strictly to corporate finance junkies.

Kennedy takes a chatty, insider's approach to Panarctic's boardroom manoeuvring. It's like eavesdropping on some very informed cocktail party chatter — interesting, but not always comprehensible.

What may redeem the book for the average reader are its descriptions of the struggle to "make hole" in the harsh Arctic environment that strains men and machines. Kennedy can make these efforts sound romantic — the effort, for example, to simply move hundreds of tonnes of drilling equipment to well locations by aircraft and barge.

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