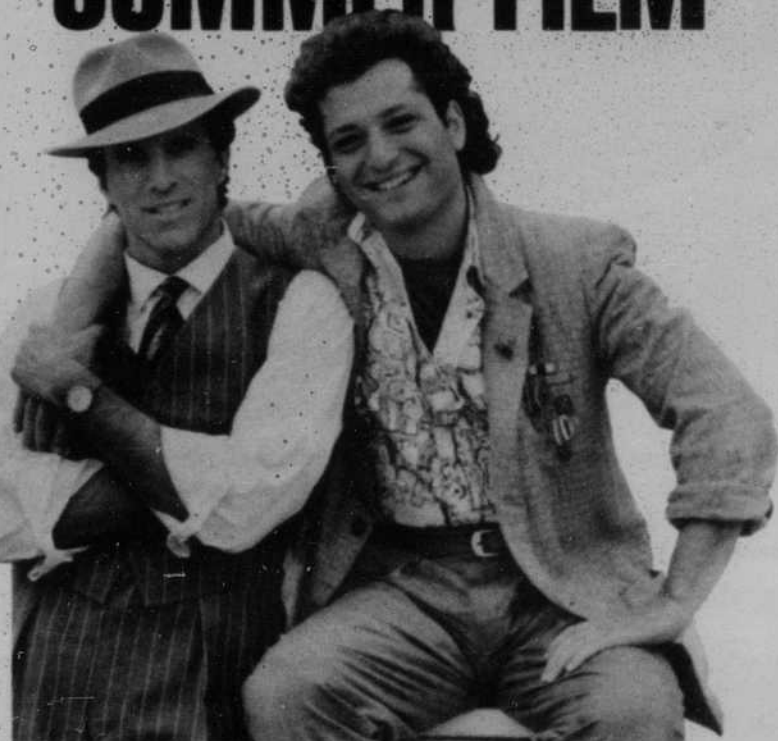


SUMMER FILM

P R E V I E W



Ted Danson (right) and Howie Mandel play sidekicks down on their luck in *A Fine Mess*, a zany comedy inspired by a classic Laurel and Hardy short.

A FINE MESS

Laurel and Hardy would be pleased. The bumbling silliness of the historic comic duo is the inspiration for director Blake Edwards' new film, *A Fine Mess*, starring Ted Danson and Howie Mandel as two equally bumbling ne'er-do-wells.

Laurel and Hardy would seem to be a natural for the director who, with Peter Sellers, created the modern master of bumble, Inspector Clouseau, in the *Pink Panther* films. Indeed, "They were Blake's favorite comedy team," commented co-star Mandel.

Although loosely based on a classic short by the comic legends, *A Fine Mess*, "is more of an homage," said Mandel. "It

was originally called *The Music Box*, which was the famous Laurel and Hardy short with them trying to get a piano up a flight of stairs. But this movie is a completely original story. It's very physical comedy, wacky, with chases—I guess it has a little piece of every one of their movies in that sense."

"I play Dennis Powell, a roller-skating hamburger stand waiter who's been working his whole life to save up for his own fast-food restaurant. Ted Danson plays his buddy, a movie extra whose dream is to become a big star. This story is about the "fine mess" he (Danson) gets us into when he sees something he's not supposed to see."

John Carpenter turns his weird sensibilities to Chinatown in *Big Trouble in Little China*. Kurt Russell (second from right) stars as an adventurer who helps a friend (Dennis Dunn, second from left) find his kidnapped wife.



BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA

Welcome to dinner in Chinatown in John Carpenter's *Big Trouble in Little China*. After you finish the tea and the dim-sum, how about a stroll through the underworld, with such exotic attractions as the "Room of the Upside-Down Hell" the "Honorable Hall of the Infernal Judge?"

You'll know you're in big trouble when you bump into Jack Burton (Kurt Russell) and his pig hauling truck, the Pork Chop Express. Jack is helping his friend Wang Chi (Dennis Dunn) recover his lost green-eyed bride kidnapped by Lo Pan (James Hong) and his fiendish thugs.

Aided by Gracie Law, a sensuous attorney played by Kim Cattral, and Egg Shen (Victor Wong), a clairvoyant bus driver, Jack and Wang enter an imaginary underworld ruled by Lo Pan. According to legend, Lo Pan is a cold-blooded spirit imprisoned in hell by the First Emperor of China, who can only regain his virility by coupling with that one-in-a-million green-eyed woman.

Pretty kinky, huh? *Big Trouble* starts off as an action-adventure-comedy, shifts into high gear as bizarre circumstances mount and winds up as a kung fu-monster-ghost story. Whew!

"It's an ensemble piece, and it's very complex," says Carpenter, who is famous for his low-budget, gripping thrillers like *Halloween* and *Christine*.

However, *Big Trouble* is a \$25-million production, filmed mostly in Los Angeles with a great deal of special effects from fiery explosives to an 8-foot human skull which emits eerily-colored smoke.

But stripped of its haunting facade, the basic premise of *Big Trouble* is still good guys versus bad guys. This ancient tradition of story-telling "goes back to the days of Ulysses and Shakespeare," Carpenter says. And, though it may sound simplistic, Carpenter believes that's the key to every one of his films: sheer fun intertwined with subtle messages.

—Albert Pang



Will Rodney Dangerfield (left) finally get some respect? Maybe in his new film, *Back to School*, where he plays a businessman who goes back to college.

BACK TO SCHOOL

"A movie's hard," says Rodney Dangerfield, his long-doleful face looking more sorrowful than ever.

"When you're telling jokes to a camera, you don't get much of a response. Know what I mean?" It's not much solace to a man who's used to making millions laugh that the cameraman and the boom operator are trying to keep from falling down with laughter while filming *Back to School*, Dangerfield's latest movie.

"They're laughing because they weren't expecting that," says director Alan Metter. "Rodney makes up material all the time. I leave at the end of the day, exhausted from shooting. He goes home to polish jokes and continue to work."

In *Back to School*, Dangerfield plays a self-made millionaire who signs on as a freshman at college in order to help his shy son through a bad time. It's a comedy of errors with Dangerfield triumphing in spite of himself amid the usual complement of rapid-fire one-liners.

—Joan Goodman

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