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ENTERTAINMENT

'Independence Day' offers fun summer viewing

Despite the initial popularity of this summer blockbuster, it may not attract Oscars the way it has moviegoers

By Jean M. Bond
Entertainment Reporter

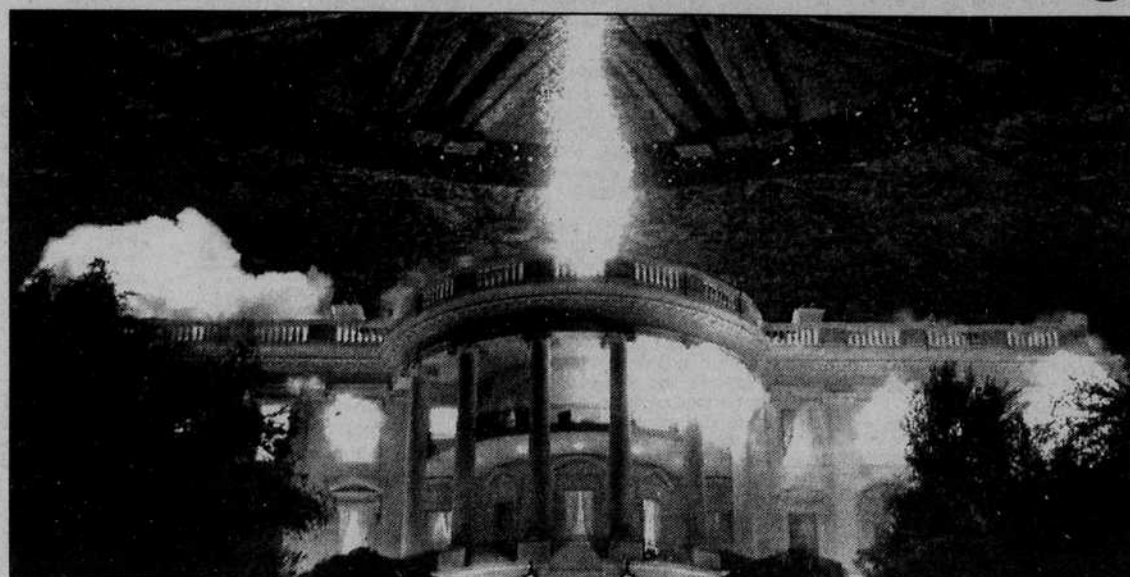
The alien beings are straight out of *Aliens*, the plot is blatantly stolen from *War of the Worlds*, the ending is right out of *Star Wars* (although you might recognize ending elements from *War of the Worlds*, too), and it's all wrapped up in a two-hour special effects show.

Summer is here, and that means movies vying for your attention. One of the biggest right now is *Independence Day*, which just had one of the biggest opening weekends ever. But while *Independence Day* is a fun movie, don't expect Oscars for this film. It rides on special effects and stars that everyone loves, not originality.

Will Smith plays Captain Steven Hiller, a tough and talented young fighter pilot who aspires to fly the space shuttle and hopes to marry his girlfriend Jasmine, a single mom and stripper. Smith is quite good in this role, as predictable as it is. Smith's portrayal is especially funny at all the right moments, and his extra attitude really makes this character.

Hiller's love interest, Jasmine, is played by Vivica Fox. This is Fox's first starring role in a feature film, and if her acting doesn't improve, it could be one of her last. To be fair, Jasmine's character is also poorly developed in the script. A minor complication involving her job seems superfluous. The writer didn't take this aspect of Jasmine's life far enough to make it interesting or relevant, so why bother?

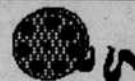
Bill Pullman plays the Presi-



Independence Day aliens descend upon America in a flurry of special effects.

COURTESY PHOTO

MOVIE REVIEW



Independence Day

Rated PG-13

Playing at Cinema World

★★★

dent of the United States, and does so superbly. This guy is really good. The President, a former fighter pilot himself, seems to be having a rough presidency until the aliens show up. He's plagued by media accounts of him as wishy-washy and wimpy. But when the going gets tough, Mr. President becomes the hero of the day. Pullman is the tough, decisive president we'd probably all like to see in an election year. At the same time, Pullman brings out the confusion the President feels when he's trying to figure out what to do about the aliens, and the pain the President goes through at the death of one of

those closest to him. Pullman accomplishes all this without being ham-handed about it.

Jeff Goldblum seems to be in serious danger of being typecast as the eccentric genius. As in *The Fly* and *Jurassic Park*, Goldblum plays a quirky, brilliant type whose genius helps save the day. Not that I mind. Goldblum is very good at this role, and his character in *Independence Day* is somewhat more tender than in similar roles he's had.

Judd Hirsch as David's acerbic father, Randy Quaid as a drunken ex-pilot who claims to have been kidnapped by the aliens ten years earlier, and Robert Loggia as General Grey, who stays by the President's side through it all, round out the cast.

Harvey Fierstein and Brent Spiner have small roles in the film as well. Fierstein as David's boss and friend is fabulous, as always, but I expected more from Spiner, better known to Trekkies as Data. He plays Dr. Okun, a scientist at the government's alien

research lab, but he just didn't push the role far enough.

While the acting may be a mixed bag, the special effects are truly incredible. Much of the movie is done with models, but you wouldn't know it to watch the movie. Almost a year's worth of work on the models resulted in beautifully detailed alien ships and realistic miniatures of major cities. Computers filled in more of the effects with digital composition and animation, and incredible pyrotechnic effects complete the show.

All in all, *Independence Day* is not a bad movie, but you should know what you're getting into. This isn't a serious film, the plot isn't original, and the performances are patchy in places. But if you don't mind the crowds, you want to see some impressive special effects, you're fond of the actors in this movie, and you just want some summer fun, this is a good excuse for sitting in a nice, cool theatre and eating too much popcorn.

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