



"Wayne's World" starred Mike Myers, left, and Dana Carvey. ILLUSTRATION BY BRANDEN BARKER/USA TODAY NETWORK; FILE PHOTO

A LOOK BACK AT 'WAYNE'S WORLD' AS THE MOVIE TURNS 30

Brian Truitt USA TODAY

Thirty years after the release of her comedy hit "Wayne's World," director Penelope Spheeris would like to clear up a "crazy gossipy thing."

"Bohemian Rhapsody" became a cultural touchstone thanks to the movie's iconic head-banging scene with Mike Myers and Dana Carvey's rock-loving, cable-access dudes from "Saturday Night Live."

But internet rumors persist that Spheeris really wanted a Guns N' Roses song in that sequence instead of the memorable Queen number. (In 2018, Myers told Stephen Colbert he threatened to walk off the movie when the studio pushed for GNR.)

"That's just nuts," Spheeris tells USA TODAY. She had tried to cast Axl Rose's band in her 1988 documentary "The Decline of Western Civilization Part II: The Metal Years."

"They were on board for most of the time and then right before we were going to shoot, they bailed. So there was no way I was going to hire Guns N' Roses. I was mad at them!" She laughs and adds: "Although Slash is a very good friend right now. I love him."

"Wayne's World" audiences loved the comedy catchphrases of Wayne Campbell (Myers) and Garth Algar (Carvey), from "Party time!" to "We're not worthy!" But Spheeris, a longtime documentary and music video director, gave pop culture an excellent lesson in rock history with a hit soundtrack featuring Cinderella, Black Sabbath, Jimi Hendrix and more.

"I will always, if I'm making a movie, try and boost it up wherever I can with music that I feel makes a difference," Spheeris says. "To me, a movie is half visual and half audio – it's not mostly visual like most people think. The audio is so extremely important and you can get so much more emotion if you choose the right song."

And for "Wayne's World" (which celebrated its 30th anniversary last week with a new limited-edition SteelBook Blu-ray), that was definitely "Bohemian Rhapsody," with the movie renewing interest worldwide in both the tune and Queen. The film kicks into high gear early on with this instant-classic needle drop as Wayne, Garth and their friends head-bang in the "Mirthmobile" (a blue 1976 AMC Pacer) on their way to a concert.

The scene proved to be a tough one to film, with Myers and Carvey complaining about neck and head pain during two arduous overnight shoots. But Spheeris was "pretty confident" all their head-banging was going to be worth it because she test-drove the same bit in her 1987 movie "Dudes," where Jon Cryer and Flea (from the Red Hot Chili Peppers) rock out to "Hava Nagila" in a blue Volks-



The most famous scene from "Wayne's World" had the characters head banging to Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody." PARAMOUNT PICTURES

wagen.

"So I knew it was a fun scene, but I didn't know that the 'Bohemian Rhapsody' version of that was going to be so iconic and so remembered and loved by so many people forever," Spheeris says. "It just struck a note, excuse the pun."

The movie is riddled with celebrity and music cameos, from rock icon Alice Cooper to Chris Farley in his first movie role. Rob Lowe's portrayal of smarmy and villainous TV producer Benjamin Kane, who steals Wayne and Garth's show out from under them, helped revive his acting career after a sex-tape scandal in the late '80s: "He told me, 'I had no idea I could actually be the straight funny guy,'" Spheeris says.

And before legendary rocker Meat Loaf had his own huge music comeback in 1993 with "Bat Out of Hell II: Back in to Hell," Spheeris cast her old friend in a small part as a bouncer named Tiny. Spheeris knew the singer from record-label parties at clubs like the Rainbow Bar and Grill on the "insane" Sunset Strip in the 1980s.

"He loved doing it. It was just a little tiny moment just like Chris Farley, but people remember them. Meat Loaf sure did know how to be a bouncer at a door because he and I walked through many of those doors and came up against those bouncers," says Spheeris, adding it was "very shocking" to hear about the musician's death last month at age 74. "I'm really sorry about it. My gosh, he was too young."