

Movies



1991

Barton Fink heads list of Top 10

by Daniel W. Duffy

The year 1991 was a miserable one at the box office thanks to increased ticket prices and a whole host of mediocre movies. *Daily Variety* cited a 3 percent drop-off in attendance from 1990 which may not seem like much to the average movie-goer but translates to millions of dollars for the film industry.

It is hard to pick out 10 superb movies from last year when there were so many lousy films. Because of the down year, many Hollywood moguls are now forced to reconsider the type of movies they make. Garden-variety films just don't wash with the American public today. This is true with the possible exception of films like *Robin Hood* that are very run-of-the-mill, but have a big-name bankable star like Kevin Costner or someone like Arnold Schwarzenegger who seem to be the only true recession-proof performers.

The Top 10

10) *The Addams Family* - Hopeless but hilarious dark humor. No story to speak of, just an abundance of sick-o foolishness.

9) *Mobsters* - OK, this film falls under the panache over-substance category, but what can I say? It was a sorry year for Hollywood. The only saving grace of this film was Christian Slater, one of the most energetic and flamboyant young actors today. Slater added life to this otherwise breathless film.

8) *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* - The special effects alone were enough to merit Top-10 standing for this flick even though the story was pretentious and tedious at times. They should have cast Bud Bundy from "Married With Children" as the young John Conner instead of



(Above) Costas Mandylor, Richard Grieco, Christian Slater and Patrick Dempsey are the young tommy guns in 'Mobsters'.



(Left) Robin Williams and Jeff Bridges ponder life in 'The Fisher King.'

having Punky Brewster or whoever they had in the role. That kid (Edward Furlong) was obnoxious and should be flogged with a wet noodle.

7) *The Silence of the Lambs* - If someone told you that Max Cady from *Cape Fear* was more terrifying than Hannibal Lector, its time to lock up the liquor cabinets and check their breath for a hint of booze. Anthony Hopkins played Hannibal the Cannibal with terrorizing fervor. Jodie Foster also gave a powerful

performance as Agent Clarisse Starling in her finest outing since *The Accused*. Hopefully with the success of this film and others like *Cape Fear*, the psychological thriller will put an end to shameless slasher flicks once and for all.

6) *The Fisher King* - Robin Williams teams up with Monty Python grad Terry Gilliam to make this vibrant, memorable comedy. There are about five movies jam-packed into this film, but

none of the heart was lost in the shuffle.

5) *Bugsy* - Warren Beatty may be vain, but he is intense in all his grandeur. As one of the only solid pictures to come out last year, it should make a serious dent at the Academy Awards, otherwise somebody's palm is getting greased.

4) *Jungle Fever* - Spike Lee's most thought-provoking movie to date. Wesley Snipes was the jack-of-all-trades last year with his roles ranging from an architect in *Fever* to the mastermind drug dealer Nino Brown in *New Jack City* showing he is a versatile power to reckon with.

3) *Beauty and the Beast* - I guess I'm just a softie at heart.

2) *Dogfight* - Nancy Savoca's excellent period piece is about the unusual relationship between a marine and an earth muffin. Sensational flick. Lili Taylor and River Phoenix both shine in this tender movie.

1) *Barton Fink* - The Coen Brothers strike pay dirt once again with this oddball movie that is as looney as it gets. There is nothing quite like this movie, it spans all boundaries and leaves the viewer mystified and awe struck. John Turturro and John Goodman combine to form one of the most off-the-wall teams of all time. *Barton Fink* swept the majority of the major awards at the Cannes Film Festival last year, but will undoubtedly be glossed over at the Oscars because of its general weirdness. The films that win top honor at Cannes are usually far more interesting and intriguing anyway.

The Top 5 disappointments:

There were far worse pictures last year, but these

see Top 10 page 8B

Another point of view

10. *The Doors* - Oliver Stone's Jim Morrison epic has been criticized for supposed factual errors. But it delivered the year's best cinematography and Val Kilmer's performance as Morrison is worthy of an Oscar nomination.

9. *Queens Logic* - A great ensemble cast headed by Joe Mantegna take on mid-life crises together.

8. *Once Around* - Danny Aiello is great as the patriarch of a family who is invaded by over-zealous Richard Dreyfuss.

7. *Rush* - See page 8B.

6. *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* - Believe it or not, director James Cameron gets the most out of his \$88 million; the special effects are something to behold.

5. *Thelma & Louise* - Director Ridley Scott (*Blade Runner*) and actresses Susan Sarandon and Geena Davis deserve Oscar nominations for this road adventure.

4. *Barton Fink* - The Cannes Film Festival grand-prize winner will probably be overlooked by the Academy.

3. *The Fisher King* - After an unfortunate accident, Jeff Bridges searches for the meaning of life with a looney street person (Robin Williams).

1. *JFK* - See page 8B.

1. (tie) *The Silence of the Lambs* - Anthony Hopkins (as the chilling Dr. Hannibal Lector) and Jodie Foster (FBI trainee Clarisse Starling) were the year's two best characters; their interaction is unforgettable.

- Ched Whitney