

De Laurentiis' stakes claim with bog-budget 'U-571'

Kam Williams

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Legendary producer Dino De Laurentiis has backed 116 films during his 60 years in the movie business.

In that span, the two-time Oscar-winner (Fellini's *La Strada* and *Nights of Cabiria*) built his name by indulging a taste for lavish, overblown spectacle.

De Laurentiis enjoyed an impressive run with blockbusters such as "King Kong" (the 1976 remake), "War and Peace," "The Bible," "Barbarella," "Mandingo," "Ragtime," "Mutiny on the Bounty," "Serpico," "Three Days of the Condor," "Conan the Barbarian," "Death Wish" and "Tai Pan."

After the death of his wife of over 30 years, Italian actress Silvana Mangano, De Laurentiis produced only a handful of relatively modest offerings for a decade or so.

But now re-married to, re-invigorated by and teamed up with his co-producer Martha Schumacher, Dino is making a play to reclaim the top spot among movie moguls. The couple is currently at work on "Hannibal," the eagerly-anticipated sequel to "Silence of the Lambs."

"U-571" is a big-budget production worthy of the De Laurentiis trademark.

Set in April of 1942, the film dramatizes a fictionalized account of the battle between Nazi and Allied vessels over the shipping lanes in the Atlantic Ocean.

The movie focuses narrowly on the heroic exploits of the crew of an American submarine which has been outfitted to resemble a German U-Boat.

Their Trojan horse, top-secret mission is to venture deep into enemy waters to

rendezvous with a disabled U-571 bobbing helplessly on the sea. The plan is to sucker the Nazis aboard by posing as rescuers. For, if the Americans can seize the sub without scuttling, they might capture the invaluable coding device on board. This, in turn, would enable Allied intelligence to decipher Nazi movements.

The film features an ensemble cast headed by admitted naked bongo enthusiast Matthew McConaughey (Ed TV) as raw Naval Academy graduate, Lt. Andrew Tyler.

The charismatic Mr. McConaughey proves his star quality here, in a challenging role as a leader of men. And the crew includes the oft-nude character actor Harvey Keitel (*The Piano*) and rock star Jon Bon Jovi who looks naked with his flowing tresses shorn to a regulation crewcut.

The film is in many ways a throwback to stock World War II flicks, indulging simplistic themes of sacrifice, bravery and patriotism without pause for much introspection. This translates to extra action for fans of the genre. Director Jonathan

Mostow (Breakdown) went to great lengths to stage spectacular battle scenes, building 600-ton full-sized, sea-going replicas of American and German submarines.

The outdoor sea sequences, shot on enormous outdoor tanks at MFS Film studios in Malta, were supervised by Lance Julian, marine coordinator for the Academy Award-winning "Titanic." The underwater sequences were handled by special effects Oscar-winner Allen Hall (*Forrest Gump*), who shot those scenes in a

giant tank in Rome.

The work of the two experts dovetail nicely to recreate a rather convincing overall sea war scenario.

While not as gripping as *Das Boot*, U-571 offers an engaging, if ultimately predictable, ride. A battle against time, fates dependent on camaraderie, wit and the will to live. Will these nine, noble American sailors prevail?

Good (2.5 stars); Rated PG-13 for shellings, shootings, torpedoes, depth charges, pyrotechnics and hand-to-hand fighting.

The Hungry One

Samba Grill captures great tastes of Brazil

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The Hungry One wanted some Brazilian food but didn't want to go all the way to Brazil. Instead, the Hungry One headed to the Samba Grill in the Mirage Hotel.

The Hungry One was hungry and Samba Grill is an all you can eat restaurant but not a buffet. Waiters actually wait on you.

Samba Grill features a Brazilian Barbecue called Rodizio.

First they bring you assorted breads and a spicy tossed salad. Don't eat too much.

Next they bring you side dishes of black beans and rice, plantains and carrots. Again, don't eat too much.

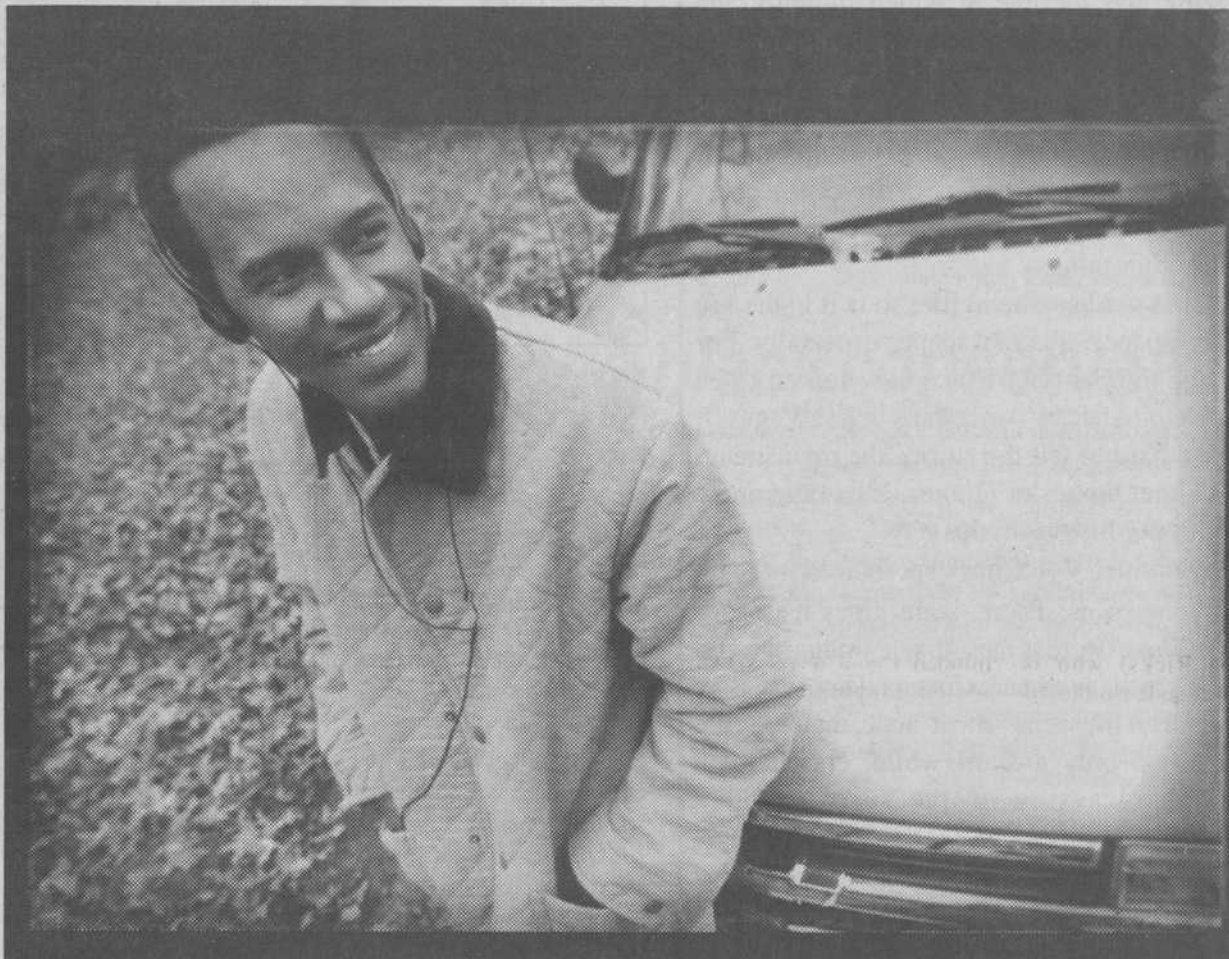
Save your appetite for the barbecue. You have to love meat to enjoy this meal. The meats are marinated in delicious Brazilian spices. Waiters are continuously bringing around chicken, salmon, pork, sausage, ribs and different cuts of beef that have been grilled.

Enjoy this meal with a Mojito, a Cuban drink with limes, sugar, rum and mint, or try a Batida, a Brazilian fruit shake spiked with sugar cane alcohol, or Guarana soda from Brazil made with a berry from the Amazon.

A trio plays Brazilian and Latin music in the evening.

The service is excellent as long as you are sitting in the main dining room.

The Hungry One highly recommends Samba Grill in the Mirage. Reservations are strongly suggested 791-7111; Hours: Sunday through Thursday 5:30 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.; Friday and Saturday 5:30 p.m. to midnight.



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Tamborines

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Furthermore, the audience had to wait through lengthy scene changes that disrupted the flow of the work.

Since the play ran for approximately 2 hours and 40 minutes, watching it became an endurance test. With a little creative nipping and tucking of scenes at least thirty minutes could have been excised.

"Tambourines to Glory" was a mixed blessing. At its best, the audience was provided with a serio-comic meditation on spirituality that stimulated the mind and observed some local talent with potential. At its worst, the play was rife with acting goofs and an overly long production.