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Spotlight

'CliffyB': 'Gears' movie still on track

John Powell - Cineplex Entertainment

The creator of the 2007 video game of the year is spending more time these days shooting down movie gossip than wily opponents on Xbox Live.

Slamming the lid on the rumours to the contrary, Clifford Bleszinski (alias 'CliffyB') wants fans to know that the 'Gears of War' movie is still alive and well. It is in the development phase and moving ahead on all fronts.

"We are currently at the point where we have had a couple drafts of the script and now we are talking to different directors and trying to feel out who would be the best fit for it," Bleszinski told Cineplex Entertainment while he was in Toronto promoting the Windows PC release of 'Gears of War'.

The evil Locast in 'Gears of War'.

A multi award-winning 'hide and seek' first-person shooter, 'Gears' tells the story of a disgraced army officer leading a rag-tag brigade of soldiers in a perpetual war against invading aliens. According to

Bleszinski, the game's action film presentation immediately sparked thoughts of a big screen movie adaption.

"When we made the game, it was important to us to keep that breakneck pacing so we had that Jerry Bruckheimer - Michael Bay action movie experience going. That is where 'Gears' came from and that is why it resonated very well with people," said Bleszinski.

While the project has no director attached to it at present, Stuart Beattie, the scribe behind '30 Days Of Night', 'Collateral' and 'Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl', is working on the 'Gears' screenplay for New Line Cinema. Beattie, a fan of the game, landed the gig after messaging a New Line executive on Xbox Live one night.

"It has been a fascinating process. It has been one where Stu actually came to us as far as the fact that he loved the game and realized that he didn't quite know how to put together a huge blockbuster," recalled Bleszinski.

Donning the movie producer's hat is a major shift for the video game guru at Epic Games. Thus far, he has been learning on the fly absorbing all that he can about the twists and turns of the movie-making business while at the same time bearing the burden that traditionally, movies based on video games don't exactly have the best track record. There has been more misses than hits to be sure.

Dominic Santiago, a member of Marcus Fenix's strike force in 'Gears'.

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Seinfeld's back with 'Bee Movie'

John Powell - Cineplex Entertainment

Nobody can ever question comedian Jerry Seinfeld's dedication to the 'Bee Movie'. Although no animals were injured in the filming of the DreamWorks animated film opening November 2nd, the funnyman was. In conducting research at a bee farm, Seinfeld got more than he bargained for when a bee keeper opened a hive for him to examine.

'The Queen got a little upset and they sent a bee out to get me. He stung me on the nose,' said Seinfeld who wasn't wearing a protective suit at the time because as he puts it, the beekeeper was worried that the standard issue outfit would "offend" the insects.

Humbled but not defeated, Seinfeld forged ahead with his story of an idealistic bee who rebelliously breaks from tradition by refusing to accept his pre-ordained fate. Naturally, he causes quite a stir in the animal kingdom. Rescued from an untimely demise by florist Vanessa (Rene Zellweger), Barry B. Benson (Seinfeld) quickly realizes there is more to life than just making honey.

"I just thought bees were funny. They live in a small company. They have a product. They have offices. They have bosses. They have employees. They have schedules," said Seinfeld while in Toronto promoting the film. "A hive seemed like a little corporation hanging from a tree to me so I thought that it would be a great situation for a movie."

While working on the film for four years, Seinfeld turned down other projects including thoughts of teaming with filmmaker and writer David Mamet on a comedy. The challenges of making an animated feature were just too enticing.

Seinfeld promoting the 'Bee Movie' in Toronto. (Photo: John Powell, Cineplex Entertainment.)

"This project was about working in a whole different medium as this movie is entirely made of computer-generated characters," he said. "The trick was to pour the liquid into a different glass and have it taste the same."

For Seinfeld and the other producers, casting Rene Zellweger as Barry's friend/love interest Vanessa was an absolute no-brainer. Having seen her charming performances in 'Bridget Jones's Diary', 'Shark Tale' and 'Jerry Maguire', they knew her voice and more importantly, her persona, would be perfect for the role.

"Rene was my first choice because I think she is an incredibly talented actress. She has a very sweet personality," said Seinfeld of the casting process. "She is the type of woman a bee would fall for. Her voice is like honey."

Seinfeld also managed to get his good friend and star of 'Madagascar', Chris Rock, a role in the 'Bee Movie' too when the comedian made a friendly inquiry as to how the project was coming along.

"I told him to come on down. I would think of something for him to do. He ended up becoming a mosquito," Seinfeld laughed.

Not only did Seinfeld have fun pulling friends into the project but also his family too. His three children are becoming more and more excited as the premiere date gets closer and closer.

"It is much more fun having children and getting to see their faces. They are so excited about it."

Simon J. Smith, the director of the 'Bee Movie'. (Photo: John Powell, Cineplex Entertainment.)

Looking back, Seinfeld is proud of what he was able to accomplish with the 'Bee Movie', especially the fact that he was able to put a lot of his own personality into the film. Moviegoers who cherished the quirky observational comedy Seinfeld brought to his television series will be happy to see that tone resurface in the 'Bee Movie'.

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 he comes off because that is what I am," he said.
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[Seinfeld buzzing about 'Bee Movie'](#)

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[Seinfeld touts 'Bee Movie'](#)

Seinfeld buzzing about 'Bee Movie'

John Powell - Cineplex Entertainment

TORONTO -- When it came to getting the 'Bee Movie' made, creator and comedian Jerry Seinfeld is quick to admit that he owes it all to his three children.

"They wrote most of it, actually. They gave me a lot of notes. They did a lot of rewrites. That is the great thing about kids and child labour. I love it," the New York funnyman joked with Cineplex Entertainment as he visited Toronto and hosted a special presentation to promote the DreamWorks film.

Admitting that he discovered the joys of fatherhood late in life, Seinfeld loves his role as dad to his three children but confesses there are some things he will never truly understand about parenthood.

"I love having kids but the worst part is they develop these so-called "friendships". Friendships with other little kids and you get sucked into this children's-birthday-party-infinity-wheel-of-hell that keeps starting over every year," Seinfeld kidded. "I go to birthday parties now and I envy the piñata."

The 'Bee Movie', Seinfeld's labour of love, took four years to complete and his family couldn't be happier for him.

"They are so excited about it. We are starting to see the ads on the top of the taxi cabs in New York. It is really fun."

The movie, due out in theatres November 2nd, tells the story of Barry B. Benson (Seinfeld), a worker bee who refuses to conform to the rigid society that exists in his hive. It is a place where everyone's jobs whether it be drone or worker are decided for them. Once Barry has a brief taste of the outside world and befriends a human (voiced by Renée Zellweger), he recognizes that he was truly meant for bigger and better things. When Barry realizes that humans have been "stealing" honey from bees and profiting from their ill-gotten gains for centuries, Barry does what any red-blooded American would do faced with such an injustice...he sues the entire human race.

One of the scenes shown to the media during the presentation hosted by Seinfeld and director Simon J. Smith, the court case itself is anything but ordinary. It features the voice talents of Oprah Winfrey as the judge, musician Sting and actor Ray Liotta as witnesses and a hysterical appearance by Vincent the bear from DreamWorks' 'Over The Hedge'.

Jerry Seinfeld visits Toronto to promote the 'Bee Movie'. (Photo: John Powell, Cineplex Entertainment.)

On paper, a court room may not seem like the kind of rip-roaring setting you would expect to find in a kids' movie but as with all of the other scenes that were screened, Seinfeld has managed to find a successful comedic blend that will really appeal to adults who loved the 'Seinfeld' television series and children who may not know the cultural significance of a "low-talker" or a "puffy shirt". In fact, with ex-'Seinfeld' writers Barry Marder, Andy Robin and Spike Feresten assisting Jerry on the film, there is a lot of 'Seinfeld' in the 'Bee Movie'. Since ending the TV series, Seinfeld has been very surprised by the number of children he has met who are big fans.

"We certainly never wrote the series for them but they love it. They just know when adults are acting funny. It doesn't matter to them why. They know what is funny and what isn't funny," he said.

Although he has had his fair share of projects come his way, Seinfeld is not looking to go back to television any time soon. To him, nothing beats traveling around and performing his stand-up act in front of live audiences.

"It is pretty hard to follow that act, I'll tell you," he said reflecting on his television career. "That was a pretty good show for me and I really enjoy having it as my contribution to television. To make another 150 episodes of something else wouldn't be smart. I like leaving the

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Seinfeld did reveal that he was once in talks with writer, producer and director David Mamet to star in a big screen comedy but in the end, the idea didn't quite work out.

"I never find that thing that expresses my voice and point of view," said Seinfeld about the opportunities he has been offered. "You become a successful comedian by expressing a point of view that people relate to. For me to be in something where I don't do that is a waste of my time."

By the looks of things, the 'Bee Movie' was anything but for Seinfeld. For all intents and purposes, Barry B. Benson is an animated stand-up comic pointing out all that is humorous or curious in the world. The Jerry Seinfeld brand of comedy in the film has that familiar rhythm that made his sitcom such a hit. Seinfeld is certain that kids will not only appreciate the observational humor but also the fact that the insects mimic amusing adults behaviours.

Jerry Seinfeld greets the media at the red carpet event in Toronto. (Photo: John Powell, Cineplex Entertainment.)

"When you show kids human behaviour and human action in a cartoon format they get this amazing look in their eyes. It is really great," he said.

▣ **Famous Kids:** [A Sticky Situation](#)

UPI News: Russell won't star in 'Trek'

Monday, November 12th, 2007

Former "Felicity" star Keri Russell said she hasn't signed on to appear in J.J. Abrams' upcoming "Star Trek" flick. Abrams co-created "Felicity" and directed "Mission: Impossible III," both of which featured Russell. Rumors have been circulating that Russell planned to take a role in Abrams' upcoming space project, as well. "Oh, J.J. Abrams is doing 'Star Trek!' There was maybe a thing, but it turns out that I've played it in so many other parts that we just decided to not do it," Russell told reporters in New York, while promoting her new film "August Rush." "But I was just with J.J. last week and I don't know, if he could find something else, we would (work together again.) I want to be in everything he does. ... But I don't think the thing that we had talked about is going to work out."

Bloomberg offers help in B'way talks

NEW YORK, Nov. 12 (UPI) -- New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg offered to mediate talks in the Broadway stagehand strike that started Saturday. The producers whom the stagehands are striking against accepted Bloomberg's offer, however, James Claffey, president of Local One, the union representing the workers, told the New York Daily News, "He could not be more of a gentleman but we have respectfully declined his help." Bloomberg said the city offered "neutral ground" for the negotiations, as well as a mediator. "Everybody's got an interest here in finding some ways to get together," Bloomberg said. "And the city will do everything it can to help." Bloomberg helped settle a 2003 walkout by musicians that lasted four days. The strike is estimated to cost the city about \$5 million a day in lost revenues.

NBC considering fill-in hosts

LOS ANGELES, Nov. 12 (UPI) -- NBC is reportedly considering using temporary hosts to replace late-night talk-show stars who won't cross Writers Guild of America picket lines. Most late-night shows told their non-writer staffs they would be laid off in two weeks if the strike wasn't resolved, Variety.com reported. Jay Leno and Conan O'Brien, who haven't taped new shows since the strike started last Monday, reportedly may return to the studios before the strike ends to help staff members keep their jobs. In the mean time, NBC is considering using guest hosts to fill in for Leno and O'Brien. The problem with that scenario, however, is that it might be difficult to find temporary hosts and guests willing to cross picket lines. "All sorts of things are being discussed, including guest hosts," "Tonight Show" Executive Producer Debbie Vickers said in a statement. "Our preference is that we return to production of 'The Tonight Show' with Jay as host as soon as possible. We want to protect the staff, who have been loyal to this show for decades, in the same way that Johnny Carson reluctantly returned without his writers in 1988." Carson held out for four months before he did that, however.

'Bee Movie' has wings

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The bees stung the gangster. Jerry Seinfeld's animated comedy bumped 'American Gangster' out of the top spot at the box office in Canada.

In their second week of release, 'Bee Movie' gained momentum pulling ahead of the Denzel Washington - Russell Crowe crime drama with \$2.24 million over the weekend while 'American Gangster' scored \$2.15 million. 'Bee Movie' proved it had wings holding off new entries 'Fred Claus', a Christmas comedy starring Vince Vaughn and Paul Giamatti, which came in third place with \$1.13 million and the star-studded political drama 'Lions for Lambs' which earned \$490,000.

'Lambs' features Tom Cruise, Robert Redford and Meryl Streep who are drawn together by the military conflict in Afghanistan. It is the first film to be released under the United Artists banner since Tom Cruise and Paula Wagner took over the reins of the company.

With \$430,000, the comedy 'Dan In Real Life' remained in the top five in Canada while the latest in the 'Saw' horror movie series slipped three spots in one week to number six with \$420,000. In a rather strong showing, 'Om Shanti Om', the Bollywood film exploring themes of love and reincarnation, entered the Canadian box office race in seventh place with \$310,000.

Released over a month ago, 'Across the Universe', the time-spanning musical, continued to do well in Canada adding another \$160,000 in ticket sales and laying claim to the tenth spot.

In the overall North American box office, things were pretty much the same with 'Bee Movie' coming in first with \$26 million and 'American Gangster' right behind with \$24.3 million. 'P2', a horror movie about a businesswoman being stalked by a psychopath in a parking garage on Christmas Eve, debuted in eighth with \$2.2 million.

In Quebec, the top spots were reversed with 'American Gangster' adding \$428,715 to its overall take of \$1,302,046 and 'Bee Movie' coming in second adding \$326,161 to its running tally of \$814,753. 'Fred Claus' opened with \$180,030 and 'Lions for Lambs' brought in \$95,896 during its debut weekend. After seven weeks, 'The Game Plan' starring ex-WWE wrestler Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson, held onto the tenth position with \$55,950 over the weekend and \$1,181,962 in total.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at Canadian theatres, according to Rentrak.

1. [Bee Movie](#) - \$2.24 million.
2. [American Gangster](#) - \$2.15 million.
3. [Fred Claus](#) - \$1.13 million.
4. [Lions For Lambs](#) - \$490,000.
5. [Dan In Real Life](#) - \$430,000.
6. [Saw IV](#) - \$420,000.
7. [Om Shanti Om](#) - \$310,000.
8. [30 Days Of Night](#) - \$230,000.
9. [The Game Plan](#) - \$190,000.
10. [Across The Universe](#) - \$160,000.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theatres, according to Media By Numbers LLC.

1. [Bee Movie](#) - \$26 million.
2. [American Gangster](#) - \$24.3 million.
3. [Fred Claus](#) - \$19.2 million.
4. [Lions For Lambs](#) - \$6.7 million.
5. [Dan In Real Life](#) - \$5.9 million.
6. [Saw IV](#) - \$5 million.
7. [The Game Plan](#) - \$2.4 million.
8. [P2](#) - \$2.2 million.
9. [30 Days Of Night](#) - \$2.1 million.
10. [Martian Child](#) - \$1.75 million.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at Quebec theatres, according to Cineac.

1. [American Gangster](#) - \$428,715.
2. [Bee Movie](#) - \$326,161.
3. [Fred Claus](#) - \$180,030.
4. [Saw IV](#) - \$124,125.
5. [Lions For Lambs](#) - \$95,896.
6. [The Game Plan](#) - \$55,950.

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 8. *Surviving My Mother* - \$48,655. 2006 **2007** 2009
 79 captures *Days Of Night* - \$44,349. About this capture
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