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Spotlight

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.

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 It doesn't matter to them why. They know what is funny and what isn't funny," he said.
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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 audience this way as far as television goes. It is kinda like the athlete who wants to go out with a winning game."

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.

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UPI News: NBC Universal leaving Burbank

BURBANK, Calif., Oct. 11 (UPI) -- NBC Universal is moving its network and news operations from Burbank, Calif., -- its home for 50 years -- to a complex across the street from Universal Studios. The media company was expected to announce Thursday that it will sell much of the 34 acres it owns in Burbank, including NBC Studios, and move to new headquarters in 2011, the Los Angeles Times reported. "'The Tonight Show' put us on the map," Burbank Mayor Marsha Ramo told the Times. "Without that line from Johnny Carson, about 'beautiful downtown Burbank,' most people wouldn't even know that we exist. When 'The Tonight Show' leaves, there will be a portion of our heart that will be empty." NBC Universal said it is negotiating with an unidentified buyer. The new "green" facility will be next to the 101 Freeway and have high-definition news headquarters. It is planned to house NBC News' West Coast operations and the local news staffs of KNBC and Telemundo KVEA-TV Channel 52. NBC's syndicated entertainment show "Access Hollywood" would also be located there. The sale of the Burbank property is necessary in part to pay for the elaborate new facility, the Times said.

Court calls Gore's 'Truth' biased

LONDON, Oct. 11 (UPI) -- A British judge ruled that school teachers showing Al Gore's documentary, "An Inconvenient Truth," must warn students it is politically biased. Justice Burton of the High Court in London identified nine significant errors in the global warming film in announcing his decision. Burton agreed Gore's film was "broadly accurate," but said some of the claims were wrong and had arisen in "the context of alarmism and exaggeration," The Times of London reported Thursday. "It is plainly, as witnessed by the fact that it received an Oscar this year for best documentary film, a powerful, dramatically presented and highly professionally produced film," Burton said. "It is built around the charismatic presence of the ex-vice president, Al Gore, whose crusade it now is to persuade the world of the dangers of climate change caused by global warming. It is now common ground that it is not simply a science film -- although it is clear that it is based substantially on scientific research and opinion -- but that it is a political film." Although the judge agreed the film could be shown in schools, he said it must be accompanied by notes for teachers to balance Gore's "one-sided" views.

Madonna leaving Warner Bros. Records

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pay her about half the total upfront, the Times said. The move marks another shift in trends for the record industry by bringing several of Madonna's ventures under one roof, The Wall Street Journal added. Word of Madonna's likely exit from Warner Brothers came the same day Radiohead started offering digital copies of its new album directly to fans. Meanwhile, The Eagles are selling their new album directly to Wal-Mart Stores in another departure from industry convention. It may be some time before Live Nation releases a Madonna CD, however, since she still owes one more studio album to Warner. That recording is expected to be out next year. Representatives for Live Nation and Warner Music declined to comment and Madonna's manager couldn't be reached by the Times.

The Rock rules box office again

(Associated Press) LOS ANGELES - There's something about a reunion of Ben Stiller and the Farrelly brothers that audiences didn't want to see. Stiller and the Farrellys' "The Heartbreak Kid" pulled in a modest \$14 million during opening weekend, coming in at No. 2 behind "The Game Plan," which remained the top flick for the second-straight weekend with \$16.3 million, according to studio estimates Sunday.

Paramount and DreamWorks had expected more from "The Heartbreak Kid," which reteamed Stiller with Peter and Bobby Farrelly. The trio collaborated on 1998's smash "There's Something About Mary."

The studios had gotten positive reaction from audiences at advance screenings, but reviews for "The Heartbreak Kid" came in much harsher than expected, said DreamWorks spokesman Chip Sullivan.

"We were surprised," Sullivan said. "The reviews hurt us. We love the movie. We've seen it play great. But I think reviews do matter on an R-rated movie."

An update of the 1972 comedy written by Neil Simon and directed by Elaine May, "The Heartbreak Kid" stars Stiller as a man who marries an incompatible bride, then meets the perfect woman on his honeymoon.

"The Heartbreak Kid" did manage to come in slightly ahead of the \$13.7 million first weekend of "There's Something About Mary," which lingered in theaters for months and became one of 1998's top hits at \$176.5 million.

Movies hung around longer then, but today's films tend to live or die based on their opening weekends, analysts said. That bodes ill for "The Heartbreak Kid," which would need to hold strongly in coming weeks to make good on its \$60-million-plus production budget.

"The shelf life of films is so much shorter today than it was 10 years ago," said Paul Dergarabedian, president of box-office tracker Media By Numbers. "You have to make your mark early to sustain yourself in today's marketplace."

"The Heartbreak Kid" also played much wider - 3,229 theaters, about 1,000 more than "There's Something About Mary," which still managed to pack in far more viewers. Based on today's higher ticket prices, "There's Something About Mary" pulled in nearly 3 million people over opening weekend, compared to just over 2 million for "The Heartbreak Kid."

In limited release, George Clooney's acclaimed legal drama "Michael Clayton" opened strongly with \$704,000 in 11 theaters, a promising lead-in for the film's nationwide rollout Friday.

Released by Warner Bros., "Michael Clayton" stars Clooney as an attorney at a huge Manhattan law firm dealing with personal financial ruin while trying to salvage a class-action case for a corporate client.

Disney's "The Game Plan," a football family tale starring Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, held up strongly in its second weekend, raising its total to \$42.8 million.

Overall revenues were down for the third-straight weekend, with the top-12 movies taking in a meager \$65.7 million, off 35 percent from the same weekend last year.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Media By Numbers LLC. Final figures will be released Monday.

1. "The Game Plan," \$16.3 million.
2. "The Heartbreak Kid," \$14 million.
3. "The Kingdom," \$9.3 million.
4. "Resident Evil: Extinction," \$4.3 million.
5. "The Seeker: The Dark Is Rising," \$3.7 million.
6. "Good Luck Chuck," \$3.5 million.
7. "Feel the Noise," \$3.4 million.
8. "3:10 to Yuma," \$3 million.
9. "The Brave One," \$2.3 million.

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