

'Volcano' erupts in theaters

LIGHTS! CAMERA! REACTION!

DENISE STOKES Staff Writer

VOLCANO

★★★ (out of four stars)

Mick Jackson's "Volcano" is an explosion of special effects and never-ending action. "Volcano" aims to please those who crave constant excitement.

Academy Award winner Tommy Lee Jones portrays Mike Roark, chief of the Office of Emergency Management in Los Angeles. Roark is dauntless as he battles volcanic crises stemming from the active La Brea Tar Pits.

Jones gives a commanding performance that transforms a so-so film into something worth watching.

Cast members who offer their assistance during this disaster are Dr. Amy Barnes and Emmitt Reese. Dr. Barnes is a seismologist who is portrayed by Anne Heche. Dr. Barnes usually contributes sparse, but somewhat expert advice on how to handle the emergency.

Heche made a decent attempt to compete as a strong female co-star to Jones. Only a few actresses could do a better job.

Emmitt Reese, portrayed by Don Cheadle, was the second man in charge at the Office of Emergency Management. Cheadle gives an aggressive performance, but his constant attempts at humor are futile (Reese:

"I wanna be like Mike").

A stronger script could intensify Heche and Cheadle's characters and give them the full ability to live up to Jones' performance.

L.A.'s busy Wilshire Boulevard (complete with the County Museum of Art and the Peterson Automobile Museum), were reproduced under the direction of production designer Jackson DeGovia. The sites look authentic and are recreated down to the very last detail.

Visual Effects Supervisor Mat Beck ("The Nutty Professor," "True Lies"), directs the digital lava bombs that shoot through the sky and the yards of lava that roll through the streets and within underground tunnels. "Volcano" brings viewers as close as possible to experiencing a real eruption.

"Volcano" contains an underlying message about race relations during a geological disaster. Whites, blacks and Asians ban together to hold off the destruction of their city. In one scene, a young black male is arrested by a white police officer for harassing him about sending fire trucks to his neighborhood.

Eventually the officer releases him and he joins in to help build a barricade to his neighborhood. After building the barricade, no words are uttered between the black male and the police officer as he returns to his neighborhood accompanied by a fire truck. The scene sends the subtle, but realistic message that a disaster can be a temporary cure for racism.



SPECIAL TO THE GAMECOCK

Tommy Lee Jones and Anne Heche hang on for their lives as L.A. burns in "Volcano."

Overall, Volcano is a good film with a somewhat original story line. Superb acting from Tommy Lee Jones and great visual effects turned this story by Jerome Armstrong into a winner.

Myers stars in retro-comedy

LIGHTS! CAMERA! REACTION!

TRENHOLM NINESTEIN Staff Writer

AUSTIN POWERS

★★½ (out of four stars)

With the millennium quickly approaching, the 90s seem to be desperately searching far and near for an identity.

But what words have we found thus far that characterize this decade? Retro-madness!

Following the success of numerous other warp flicks such as "Dazed and Confused" and the "Brady Bunch" films, Saturday Night Live alumnus Mike Myers has penned his latest effort since "Wayne's World 2," "Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery."

Most moviegoers anticipate the release of comedies more than any other kind of film (except for the summer blockbuster action flicks) because they want the movie to be just as hilarious as the short one-liners in trailers.

But don't get your hopes up about this movie because it falls woefully short of delivering more crazy antics than what can be seen from these 45 second spots.

Austin Powers (Mike Myers), 1960s swinger (by day he's a heart-throb fashion photographer; by night he's a British spy) is brought into the 90s after being frozen to once again save the world from certain doom by the hands of his archenemies, Dr. Evil (also portrayed by Myers), who was also frozen.

The film tries its best to spoof movies that lie within the spy genre, such as the continuing saga of James Bond, but instead is more of a poor reproduction of Jim Carrey's pinnacle comedy "Ace Ventura."

The times where one expects the movie to work, there exists just a simple idea for a comedic gimmick that is never fully expanded into what could be numerous laugh-out-loud sequences. Just the premise of a 60s swinger having to face life in the '90s has the potential to be hilarious past the point of Austin playing a CD on a turntable, but Myers never explores further possibilities.

Myers takes what he must feel is an easier route to comedy: through the spoof gimmick, popularized by the Zucker brothers with such films as "Airplane." But the spy spoofs that are incorporated into the movie only render a smile, if even that, from the audience.

For instance, there are several characters with similar, twisted names to those of one of the most popular James Bond Films, "Goldfinger." These

'Elegantly Wasted': new album, old INXS

SOUND BITES

MARCUS AMAKER Features Editor

ELEGANTLY WASTED INXS

★★★ (out of four stars)

Longevity is making a comeback in rock music. Bands like Depeche Mode, U2 and R.E.M. have remained popular by reinventing themselves and their music for the 90s crowd.

So naturally, when word first came that INXS were returning after a four year absence, everyone expected Michael Hutchence and company to do the same. But INXS' 10th studio album, *Elegantly Wasted*, is anything but a reinvention. It is a throwback to their glory days in the 80s.

Elegantly Wasted doesn't sound out of place next to classic INXS albums like *Listen Like Thieves* (1985) and *Kick* (1987) because the band sounds exactly like they did 10 years ago. Just like in their heyday, lead singer Michael Hutchence is still out to prove he's a sex symbol, and the rest of the band still knows how to rock.

Surprisingly, most of the songs on *Elegantly Wasted* are different than the hit single the album is named after. The album shifts back and forth from overblown rock ("Show Me [cherry baby]," "Shake The Tree") to R&B-inspired tunes ("Searching") to acoustic songs ("Everything," "We Are Thrown Together").

Producer Bruce Fairbairn allows

INXS to do what they do best without taking too many chances. Only a few songs deviate from the band's trademark sound. Most of the new material like the "Need You Tonight" sounding title track recalls old INXS songs.

"I'm Just A Man" mirrors some of the work Fairbairn did on the Cranberries' *To The Faithful Departed*. It's a steady rocker highlighted by melodic acoustic guitars.

"Show Me (cherry baby)" rocks in a way that recalls Kick-era INXS, while "Girl On Fire" is an intense track with horns fierce drumming by John Farriss.

If there's a drawback to this CD it's that some of the faster songs are a little overproduced; thus, *Elegantly Wasted*'s best material comes in the form of slower tracks like "She is Rising" and "Building Bridges."



SPECIAL TO THE GAMECOCK

L-R: Tim Farriss, Kirk Pengilly, Michael Hutchence, Jon Farriss, Garry Gary Beers, Andrew Farriss

These laid-back songs, along with the melodic "We Are Thrown Together," are some of the strongest tracks on the CD.

INXS have never been known for their lyrics, and *Elegantly Wasted* is further proof that songwriting isn't

Andrew Farriss' and Hutchence's strong point.

Aside from that, it's safe to say that this album is INXS' best collection of new material in a long time. Even if it sounds a little familiar.