

AT THE MOVIES

'Bubble' bursts traditional movie methods

'Last Holiday'

Queen Latifah stars in this cheerfully implausible updating of a 1950 British comedy that featured Alec Guinness in the lead role. Latifah plays a New Orleans clerk who is told she has a fatal disease. Latifah's character cashes in her savings and heads for posh living at an exclusive resort in Europe.

There, she teaches the rich and famous how to be genuine and, predictably, discovers that she's got more going for her than she thought.

Rated: PG-13
Grade: C+

'Tristan & Isolde'

A love story for the ages, provided the ages are under 30.

James Franco and Sophia Myles grab the title roles in this sparkless love story from director Kevin Reynolds. Even the action sequences seem murky and without a true sense of triumph.

Bodies fall and a classic story winds up feeling like a movie of no special distinction.

Rated: PG-13
Grade: C-

'Brokeback Mountain'

Director Ang Lee tells the heart-breaking and beautifully realized story of two gay cowboys (Jake Gyllenhaal and Heath Ledger) who are unable to live in accordance with their deepest desires.

Working in a quietly assured style that's perfectly suited to the rhythms of life in the rural West, Lee adapts a short story with keen attention to the relationship between character and environment.

Rated: R
Grade: A

'Fun With Dick and Jane'

You can really see Jim Carrey sweat as he goes through the motions of playing Dick Harper, a PR guy who has a predatory smile wiped off his face when his company goes belly up.

Rated: PG-13
Grade: C

'Glory Road'

A David-vs.-Goliath story with social kick: The Texas Western University's 1966 basketball triumph.

Coach Don Haskins started five black players in the NCAA final game against powerhouse Kentucky and scored a victory on the court and off.

Josh Lucas portrays Haskins, and Derek Luke plays Texas Western star Bobby Joe Hill.

Rated: PG
Grade: B

'Memoirs of a Geisha'

"Chicago" director Rob Marshall has created coffee-table-book beauty with elaborate set decorations, cinematography and costumes, but he has reduced Arthur Golden's best-selling novel to a fitful melodrama.

A Japanese girl (played by Suzuka Ohgo, then Zhang Ziyi) is sold into geishahood, where others torment her while she devotes her life to seeking love.

Rated: PG-13
Grade: C+

By CHRISTY LEMIRE

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK

It's the fast-food equivalent of being discovered at Schwab's, except unlike the legend of Lana Turner, this story is true. Debbie Doebereiner was asked to star in Steven Soderbergh's new movie, "Bubble," after a casting director spotted her in the drive-through window at the KFC in Parkersburg, W.Va., where Doebereiner had worked for 24 years.

To say that she would seem an unlikely choice would be an understatement. The 47-year-old mother of two grown children and grandmother of two acknowledges, "I've had a weight problem my whole life."

The day casting director Carmen Cuba saw her was the day KFC introduced its 99-cent Snacker sandwiches, and as the restaurant's general manager, Doebereiner guesses she'd made about 500 of them.

"I was pretty frazzled," the redhead said. "I looked in the mirror in the restroom. I had sauce all over me, my hat was on sideways, my hair was sticking out all over."

And then there is the small fact that Doebereiner had never acted a day in her life. That's only fitting, though, for a project that's unorthodox on every level.

"Bubble," about a murderous love triangle at a small-town doll factory, was shot on high-definition video and runs just 73 minutes. It had no script: Doebereiner and



Steven Soderbergh, director of "Bubble," stands with parts of dolls at last week's premiere of the film in Parkersburg, W.Va. The movie about workers in a doll factory had no script.

her co-stars, all non-actors from the southern Ohio-West Virginia border where the movie was set, improvised their dialogue based on an outline by screenwriter Coleman Hough, who also wrote Soderbergh's similarly stripped-down "Full Frontal."

But the most unusual part of all hasn't even happened yet. When "Bubble" comes out on Jan. 27, it will appear simultaneously in theaters and on cable television,

with a DVD release scheduled for just a few days later. Amid dwindling box-office numbers and rampant piracy, it's an experimental alternative to the traditional movie-release method.

"The biggest thing is people having access to the movie who might not have access to it for a while," Soderbergh said. "They might have read about it and they're interested, but they don't live near

an art cinema, or they don't have a video store that carries this kind of stuff, and this way they can get it and get hold of it as soon as they've heard about it."

After high-profile, star-studded films like "Ocean's Eleven" and "Traffic," which earned him a best-director Oscar, Soderbergh returns to his low-budget, "sex, lies and videotape" roots with the \$1.6 million movie.

It's the first of six he plans to shoot and release the same way with Todd Wagner and Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban, who co-own two production companies (2929 Productions and HDNet Films), two television channels (HDNet and HDNet Movies), Landmark Theatres, Magnolia Pictures and Magnolia Home Entertainment.

"I approached them because I'd read that they'd bought the Landmark Theatre chain," Soderbergh said. "They control all the forms of distribution for their own product."

Releasing a film like "Bubble" this way isn't terribly risky "because it's small," Soderbergh said.

The plan was to make it small from the beginning.

Directing people with no experience isn't a huge change from directing seasoned actors like George Clooney and Julia Roberts because "you can have the same kind of conversation," Soderbergh said.

"It's just a different kind of activity. It's like comparing two different sports: The bottom line is, you enjoy playing both of them, but they're very different sports."

TAKE IT HOME ON CD

Marlon Saunders

A Groove So Deep: The Live Sessions

Marlon Saunders is a multi-tasking musician who releases quality CDs like this collection of soul/jazz/funk fusion with percussive beats and expressive vocals.

Working with his band, Mood Control, Saunders mixes new songs and reworked tracks from his debut *Enter My Mind*, equally comfortable on the rowdy opening cut "Afro Blue My Mind," and a slower, more reflective take on Rose Royce's "I Wanna Get Next To You."

The arrangements nicely reflect the songs' various moods, from restrained to energetic, from a cool and soulful approach with jazz inflections on "The Beginning of Never."

The Peasall Sisters

Home to You

These delicate and captivating three-part sibling harmonies create musical perfection on a dozen acoustic numbers that sound straight out of the hills of Appalachia.

The three sisters are no strangers to fans of hill music; they played George Clooney's daughters in the widely acclaimed, blue-grassy film, "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" Now they're several years older, but their music still is full of the sounds of youthful innocence.

The sisters, ages 18, 14 and 12, blend their voices with warmth and sweetness, all the while easily avoiding the cloying and annoying feel that often accompanies the efforts of youngsters.

TAKE IT HOME ON DVD

'Lord of War'

Nicolas Cage nicely plays a weapons dealer who rises to the top of the heap, struggling to take care of his own, keep ahead of the competition and outfox a tenacious Interpol agent (Ethan Hawke).

The film is available in a movie-only single-disc edition or a two-disc version that includes deleted scenes, commentary and featurettes examining the movie's production and arms trading.

'Two for the Money'

Al Pacino dives into an over-the-top performance as a mogul in the high-stakes business of sports betting.

Matthew McConaughey stars as a former college quarterback with an uncanny knack for picking winners, who becomes the fair-haired protege until the newcomer's luck starts running out.

The DVD comes with a making-of featurette and a segment with the former caddy who inspired McConaughey's character.

'The Man'

Samuel L. Jackson and Eugene Levy star in a mismatched-buddy action comedy not even the filmmakers' best pals could like.

The uninspired tale of mistaken identity and tasteless gags features Jackson as a trash-talking federal agent who enlists a nice-guy salesman (Levy) in his sting to bring down a gang of weapons dealers.

Along with deleted scenes, the DVD offers a batch of featurettes on the look of Jackson's flashy wheels and the actor's "guide to cursing."

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