

The Behrend Beacon

# 'Guru' filled with cheap humor, guilty pleasures



PHOTOGRAPH BY RON T. ENNIS / FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM

Heather Graham, left, with co-star Jimi Mistry in the upcoming movie "The Guru."

by Chris Vognar  
The Dallas Morning News

"The Guru" has much in common with the average, dumb Hollywood comedy. It boasts a broad and obvious misunderstanding that sets up and then threatens to destroy a budding romance, and it has the usual assortment of shrewish and/or devious secondary characters. But there's something random and hard to resist at the movie's core, something to do with frank sex and lively dance that transforms it from just a bad movie to a good bad movie.

From a cultural standpoint, "The Guru" is Hollywood's most overt attempt to pick up on the international phenomenon known as Bollywood. Fans of the enormous Indian film industry know what the B word entails: Melodrama galore, star-crossed romance and, most important, full-scale ensemble dance numbers with blow-out-the-budget wardrobes. Some Indian critics have taken Bollywood productions to task for being frivolous, but this quality makes it perfect for "The Guru," which wears its frivolity on its sleeve.

The appealing star is Jimi Mistry, an English-bred Indian actor with the pluck to keep his chin up through a series of comedy cliches. Mistry plays Ramu, a dance instructor who moves from India to New York in his pursuit of stardom. But a wacky misunderstanding finds him auditioning for a porn director (Michael McKean, who manages to be deadpan and over the top at the same time) and falling for a porn star (Heather Graham) who lives a squeaky-clean life outside the studio. And yet another misunderstanding finds him

assuming the role of a celebrity sex guru for the rich, including an aimless socialite played by Marisa Tomei. And another ... oh, you get the idea.

There are early indications that "The Guru" will rise a bit higher than its station. The first comes when a room full of stuffy sticks-in-the-mud breaks into an elaborate and spirited dance number, traipsing through the house to sharp tabla beats. Such sequences are few and far between, but they all breathe life into a largely groan-worthy affair and keep you waiting for the next bit of inspired goofiness.

"The Guru" could have been called "Sex and Zen," if that title hadn't already been taken by a naughty Hong Kong movie involving a horse. The so-called guru gets all of his carnal tips from Graham's skin-flick starlet, comically implying that the secrets of desire can be mystically unlocked by watching "Debbie Does Dallas." There's a sly satire on experts, stardom and the media lurking in here somewhere, though it gets to emerge only between strained comic set-ups.

This is the kind of movie for which the term "guilty pleasure" was coined. Much of the humor is cheap, and yet much of the same humor is also kinda funny. You won't leave the theater enlightened, and your brain cells may run for cover. But they're sure to come back once Hollywood's stupid season subsides. And in the meantime, you might even learn a few new moves.

Grade: C+  
Starring Jimi Mistry, Heather Graham, Marisa Tomei and Michael McKean. Directed by Daisy Von Scherler Mayer. Rated R (strong sexual content and language). 91 min.

# Five MTV-approved groups ride the latest bandwagon

by Jim Farber  
New York Daily News

Every media outlet needs to flog new trends to keep fans riveted. Given the gnat-like attention span of its audience, MTV needs to hawk more than most.

Now the network seems to have hooked into a doozie. All five groups MTV picked to click during its "Spankin' New Bands" week saw a huge sales spike on this week's Billboard Album chart.

The numbers: Simple Plan shot up 71 percent, the Donnas rose 70 percent, the Used went up 51 percent, Good Charlotte added 46 percent and New Found Glory rose 26 percent.

All these anointed groups can be roughly described as neo-punk-pop acts — clearly MTV's idea of the sound of now. According to programming

czar Tom Calderone, the network decided to back this music, to the exclusion of all others, "to overstate the case that rock is back."

It showcased the bands on the popular "TRL" call-in show to prove that "the old 'TRL' image of Justin Timberlake and the Backstreet Boys is changing."

The bands were also plugged on the Infinity Broadcasting radio network, which, like MTV, is owned by Viacom.

"Between the TV and radio exposure, this was a massive assault saying 'these are the band you should check out,'" notes Ron Shapiro, vice president of Atlantic Records, which pushes the Donnas.

MTV didn't pluck the acts out of nowhere. Good Charlotte had already sold gold with its debut CD, "The Young and the Hopeless," which stands at No. 12 in Billboard's Top 200. The other groups had been getting heavy buzz on MTV.com, MTV2 and the road.

But with MTV's endorsement last week, Simple Plan went to No. 44 from No. 59 on the Top 200 and the Donnas to No. 67 from No. 117. Expect the Donnas to take another leap next week, when sales will reflect their appearance on "Saturday Night Live."

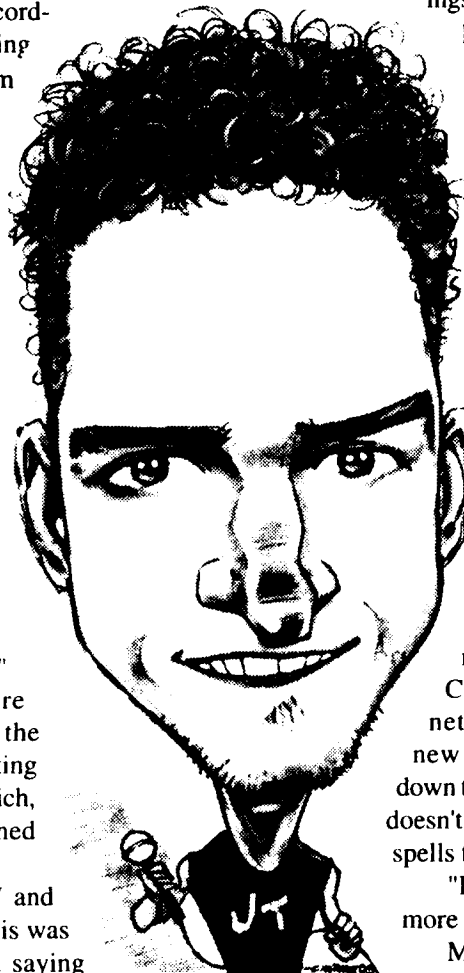
Calderone believes the favored wave will turn out to represent the true "new rock," as opposed to the groups picked by the media last year, like the Strokes, White Stripes and Vines. He says the former acts have more male than female fans and enjoy most of their followings in major cities. The

MTV-backed bands draw both sexes and have as much support in mid-size markets as in big ones.

To Calderone, the new acts have the potential to lead the biggest rock wave since the rock-rap days of Limp Bizkit, Korn and Kid Rock three years ago.

But what does this say about MTV's commitment to hip hop? Calderone says the network will push a new clutch of rappers down the road. And, no, he doesn't think the new rock spells the end of teen pop. "It just shows that it's more diverse," he says.

Meaning, at this point, you need no longer need be a teen idol to make teens scream.



# D'Onofrio wants to play it bad

by Noel Holston  
Los Angeles Times

Vincent D'Onofrio's character in NBC's "Law & Order: Criminal Intent" is one of the most idiosyncratic on television, a homicide cop with Sherlock Holmes-like deductive powers and an interrogation style that goes way beyond "in your face." More like "in your nose." Det. Robert Goren pops up suddenly, like Horton hearing a Who. But sometimes he's just not odd enough for D'Onofrio, who's played everything from a freaked-out Marine ("Full Metal Jacket") to an intergalactic terrorist ("Men in Black") to a despicable chemist/drug dealer ("The Salton Sea"). He has villain-envy.

"Sometimes we have criminals that I want to play so badly," D'Onofrio confessed to a group of TV critics in Hollywood last week.

Fred Berner, one of our producers, is basically in charge of our casting. And he always brings in these really good actors. Once they start performing, I think, Well, OK, he's going to do it. He's going to do it great. I better stop worrying about it because I ain't ever going to get there on our show."

He takes comfort in knowing he can satisfy his urge to play weirdos in films when he's on hiatus from the series.

"I'm never going to stop being a character actor," he said. "I'm never going to stop having my imagination. You know, my good friends think that every choice I make, I make it to destroy my career. It's actually just because I'm interested in that far-out stuff - you know, sometimes. And sometimes I'm interested in just everyday men that I could play."



# On 'Jimmy Kimmel,' the bar is now closed

by Paul Brownfield  
Los Angeles Times

ABC ushered in its new late-night franchise, "Jimmy Kimmel Live," on Sunday night, and already the network is making a tweak: It's evidently doing away with the show's liquor license, after an audience member vomited on her chair, apparently in close proximity to a high-ranking Disney executive.

"They thought it was out of control," Daniel Kellison, the show's executive producer, said Monday of the network's assessment of the atmosphere and decision to eliminate a bar for audience members. "People had bracelets (to get drinks), but they perceived it as chaotic."

An ABC official did not return a call for comment.

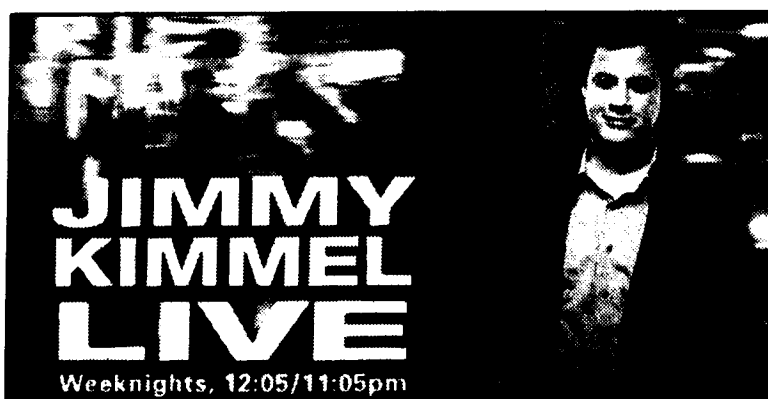
Depending on whom you believe, ABC either wants to perpetuate a nightly bacchanal in exchange for ratings or is leery of upsetting affiliates across the country. Kimmel, at least on his first show, seemed eager to suggest that what he was doing was too risqué for Disney's ears.

To that end, there were other first show highlights. Kimmel's co-host for the week, rapper Snoop Dogg, flipped off the camera numerous times, in a bit designed to draw attention to the headaches the show will give ABC censors. Actor George Clooney passed around a bottle of vodka.

Somewhere in all of this is a talk show—the one ABC hopes will give it leverage in late night among coveted 18-to-34-year-old viewers.

Kellison, who declared himself pleased with the loose, live feel of show No. 1, said Tuesday night's show was booked (with the Rock, rapper 50 Cent and Super Bowl sportscaster Al Michaels), but no one was booked yet for Wednesday's show.

When it was suggested that the show is merely being spun as a seat-of-the-pants endeavor, and that things are more planned out than he was letting on, Kellison said: "When we say we don't have any guests, we don't have any guests."



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF ABC.COM

# CBS sweeps out two series

by Paul Brownfield  
Los Angeles Times

With February sweeps set to start on Thursday, CBS announced Monday that it has pulled "Queens Supreme" and "Presidio Med" from its lineup. The network also said a second installment of "Star Search" will begin airing Feb. 19, following the conclusion of the first series on Feb. 6.

"Queens Supreme," a legal drama that replaced the Michael Mann-produced police drama "Robbery Homicide Division" on Friday nights at 10, has only aired three times.

For the short term, CBS will broadcast reruns of its more established dramas, including "CSI" and "Without a Trace." The second "Star Search" will air Wednesdays and Fridays at 8 p.m.