

'Eurotrip:' a boring guide to the gross side of travel

review by Chris Hewitt
Knight Ridder Newspapers

What does it say about a movie when the best thing in it gets cut?

That's the dilemma with "Eurotrip," in which a side-splitting cameo by Joanna Lumley unspools as an outbreak during the closing credits.

Lumley isn't in the movie proper, but her role as the unhostile hostess of a Teutonic youth hostel is funnier than anything else in this cautiously written, charismatically acted gross-out comedy.

It's your basic four-friends-on-a-road-trip-encounter-romance-and-vomit movie, in which the regurgitation begins during the opening credits and gets gurgling again every five minutes or so. I like the cast of newcomers

(particularly the Owen Wilson-esque Jacob Pitts), but the movie doesn't push its outrageousness hard enough to give us that I-can't-believe-I'm-laughing-at-that feeling.

Nude beaches? Incestuous kissing? Big whoop. Heck, even "Barbershop 2" is more politically incorrect than that.

"Eurotrip" is probably about two-thirds as funny as "Road Trip," on which it's modeled. It also boasts a primo running gag featuring Matt Damon, and at least the filmmakers had the smarts to include the Lumley scene at the end instead of saving it for the DVD.

2 stars out of 4--Directed by: Jeff Schaffer Rated: R, for tons of frontal nudity and raw language, as well as drug use. SHOULD YOU GO? It's a renter.**



While traveling Europe, these four friends search for love but lack humor.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY IMDB.COM

Upstart cable channel Fuse puts the heat on video giant MTV

by Cary Darling
Knight Ridder Newspapers

The billboards started popping up around Manhattan on May 12.

Here was Sally Struthers, her beg on, trying to save an endangered species: the music video. "Every Day, thousands of music videos go unplayed. Please help save music videos," she implores. "Watch Fuse."

One of the billboards - huge, inescapable, like the monolith in 2001 - just happened to be right outside the Times Square offices of MTV.

Then there were the coffee cups. Two million of them. Handed out around New York, emblazoned with the phrase, "Where's the M in empee-vee?"

And so was born Fuse, the upstart, 9-month-old, New York-based, cable music channel that's starting to pump up the volume and attract a lot of attention, and not just for its smart-aleck ad campaign.

According to Crain's, an ad-industry publication, Fuse ended 2003 with a 20 percent gain in subscribers and now is available to 36 million households.

A sampling of teen tastes conducted in October by media analyst Jack Myers, who interviewed more than 1,300 teenagers, ranked the network sixth among the 35 broadcast and cable networks included in the study. Among teen girls and all 15- to 18-year-olds, it came in at No. 1.

Fuse is already branching out to concert sponsorship, slapping its name on tours by Staind, Deftones and the current

Simple Plan/MxPx run. Upcoming is the Crystal Method tour.

While Fuse has a long way to go before attaining MTV's name recognition and clout - the landmark network is in more than 86 million homes, spinoff MTV2 is in 50 million homes, and MTVU, on college campuses, was just launched - it has both music fans and music-industry watchers buzzing.

"Even though their ratings are a fraction of MTV's, their audience is extremely loyal," says Myers, publisher of the Jack Myers Report and the Teen Media Brand Tracker Study. "They've tapped into a market that MTV has ignored, that is looking for new music."

It's all sweet music to the ears of Marc Juris, the man charged with taking a well-regarded but obscure video-music channel, MuchMusic USA, an offshoot of the Canadian MuchMusic videochannel, rebranding it, and getting people to watch it. He's doing that by playing videos and forgoing nonmusic programming, such as "The Osbournes" and "The Real World," which has dominated MTV's schedule in recent years. Beyond that, he made the station interactive: Fans can go online and vote on videos, purchase or sell "stock" in bands, or dedicate videos to significant others and friends.

"What I saw was an opportunity to give viewers a true voice in the way the music network would be programmed," says Fuse President Juris. "The Internet obviously has been disruptive in the way business is conducted. But there was a great opportunity to harness that power."

Like Frodo bearing the ring, Fuse started to attract the attention of the big boy on the block: MTV. According to a report in the Los Angeles Times, MTV parent company Viacom, which reportedly has contracts with record companies giving Viacom channels exclusive rights to the labels' videos, lately has been enforcing this provision. That means they have claimed first rights to Radiohead's "There There" and Beyonce Knowles' "Crazy in Love" among others. (MTV declined to comment for this story.)

But Juris is not worried. "That has no real direct impact, because our whole brand is about up-and-coming new music," he says.

Fuse is also seeking audiences that MTV might only address on its niche channels, such as MTV Espanol - channels that may not be widely available. Fuse is pursuing the "urban Latino" crowd with a Monday night show, Marcha, dedicated to Latin alternative rock.

"I realized there was no Latin alternative music being aired and there was so much of it out there," says Marcha creator/producer Moira Noriega.

Tomas Cookman, head of Los Angeles-based Cookman International, which oversees the careers of such popular Latin rock bands as La Ley, Aterciopelados, and the electronica Nortec Collective, is a Fuse fan. "It's more in line with (the bands') natural audiences than going to Miami and doing the (Spanish-language) morning shows," he explains.

For all the shots Fuse takes at MTV,

and even with the rumors of new music channels being developed by the Universal Music Group (1 A.M.) and the Playboy Channel (H.Y.P.E. TV), Juris says there's enough room for everybody.

"MTV is a very different network than we are," he says. "They have different expectations. They're building a large, youth-oriented network. We're building a new music network. We're building a multidimensional music brand. That's a very different model and point of view."

"I have a very basic philosophy: If I'm only looking at MTV, MTV2 or MTVU as my competition, I'm looking at the world with blinders on. Here's the competition: everything. Video games, DVDs, the online world. A teenager has a lot of things taking that time. It's not about one TV network. It's about the world of choice."

So what about those ads, then? In addition to Struthers, others have featured Hair Club for Men founder Sy Sperling ("Fuse - looks natural even when wet") and Tammy Faye ("I've seen the light. It was on TV and it has music videos on it. Fuse - No. 1 with Tammy, who is No. 3 with drag queens").

"We just like to have a sense of humor and be playful," Juris explains. "But you know what? The music network ain't playing music and we are. Clearly, it's a competitive point with us. We hear it from record companies and people: You play music. (Until now) there's somehow been broad public acceptance of a music network not playing music."

Just as Bart openly mocks Homer, so

Fuse can't resist slamming MTV. Because MTV produced the Super Bowl halftime spectacle that included Janet Jackson's nearly full monty, the Fuse folks had to have their say. They issued an "open letter to MTV":

Dear Friends at MTV,

Every day the entertainment industry is a victim of senseless, brutal wardrobe malfunctions, accidents and outright crimes.

MTV, we at Fuse are standing with you!

Even though we are competitors, we think it's time to put aside our differences and take a stand. Let us not dwell on last Sunday's halftime show - the dated songs, the random crotch grabs and the senseless lip-synching. No. Let's put all that aside and focus on the issue at hand: VELCRO DOES NOT WORK.

Many of us here have been victims of wardrobe malfunctions and understand the life-long impact one single costume catastrophe can have.

We at Fuse will support you any way we can. We will continue to play music videos every day, all day, day after day after day.

We are also willing to donate generously to the I.F.D.A.D.A.N.T. (The Institute for the Development of Advanced Double Adhesive Nipple Tape).

Signed in solidarity,
Your Friends at Fuse

P.S. For what it's worth, we also thought Chicken of the Sea was a chicken-based product. Give the breast a rest. Watch music videos on Fuse.

The Jarvis File

Another round of 'Sex':

Don't put down those cosmopolitians yet, and keep your Manolo Blahniks on. The ladies of "Sex and the City" are in the works to make a movie continuing the lives of Carrie, Charlotte, Samantha and Miranda. The city of New York will continue to be the star of the movie as the ladies continue where they will leave off this Sunday.

Second best:

Even though Jessica Simpson and Nick Lachey are America's sweethearts of reality television, it seems that Jessica might be the more popular of the two. Jessica's album has outsold Nick's and at the Golden Globes, Nick was asked to move out of the way as the photographers clamored to get Jessica's picture. Jessica has even snagged her own television show where her character will be named, Jessica Sampson. Nick got his own television show, too, but after Jessica was already offered one. She's the hotter of the two and now, more than ever, the more popular one.

You're fired:

If you watch NBC's "The Apprentice" you may notice that Donald Trump does the firing. Turns out in real life this real estate tycoon has never uttered those words before. He has enough money to pay people to do his dirty work.

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Arts & Entertainment Highlights

Top 40 Singles

1. "The Way You Move" Outkast featuring Sleepy Brown
2. "Yeah!" Usher featuring Lil Jon & Ludacris
3. "Hey Ya!" Outkast
4. "Someday" Nickelback
5. "Toxic" Britney Spears
6. "With You" Jessica Simpson
7. "Slow Jamz" Twista featuring Kayne West and Jamie Foxx
8. "Here Without You" 3 Doors Down
9. "My Immortal" Evanescence
10. "It's My Life" No Doubt

According to Billboard.com

Album Releases on Feb. 24

not looking to good this week

New Movie Releases

- "Welcome to Mooseport": Gene Hackman, Ray Romano
- "Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen": Lindsay Lohan, Megan Fox
- "Eurotrip": Michelle Trachtenberg, Jacob Pitts

DVD Releases on Feb. 24

- "Matchstick Men"
- "Spy Kids 3-D: Game Over"