

'Hot Wax'... and the Beat Goes On

BY GREGG KILDAY

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The flirtation between Hollywood and rock 'n' roll continues: Paramount Pictures has set an Oct. 18 start date for "American Hot Wax," its week in the life of '50s disc jockey Alan Freed.

Floyd Mutrux, who wove a fair amount of '70s pop into his teen-age romance, "Aloha, Bobby and Rose," has been signed to direct the feature, for which John Kaye has written an original screenplay. Art Linson, one of the producers of the rhythm-and-blues-scored "Car Wash," will produce the film. And William A. Fraker, who also worked on "Aloha," will serve as cinematographer.

No actor has yet been set to play Freed, who is credited with inventing the phrase, rock 'n' roll. Freed was the reigning voice of the reigning voice of rock in New York in the late '50s where he held forth over radio while also producing live rock 'n' roll spectacles at the Paramount Theater. His career was cut short by government investigations into the nascent rock industry in 1959.

"When you look back at it, the music was all very innocent and romantic then," said Linson. "Still, it managed to offend the entire establishment."

"American Hot Wax" will focus on a week when Freed was in his glory.

To approximate the rock 'n' roll of the era, Linson plans to feature some of the surviving acts of that day—most notably the long-rocking Chuck Berry.

In addition, the screenplay also calls for such invented rock acts as Teen-age Louise, the Chesterfields, Michael (Mookie) Aletta and Cheryl Berkowitz.

"We went back to New York and assembled a vocal



Alan Freed

group called the Chesterfields, a streetcorner New York group like Little Anthony and the Imperials," Linson explained. "If the film is at all successful, the group could go out on the road and have a career of its own."

A \$4-million production, "Wax" will film in both New York City and Los Angeles.

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As a number of reviewers have noted, the comic travails of twinship are not unique to Marty Feldman's "The Last Remake of Beau Geste," in which Feldman is inexplicably matched with his "identical twin," Michael York. While the complications of double births extend back at least as far as William Shakespeare's "The Comedy of Errors," one of the more recent manifestations of twin confusion took place in "Start the Revolution Without Me," originally released in 1970.

In that movie, Donald Sutherland and Gene Wilder played two matched sets of identical twins, one high-born, one low, who survive the confusion of their simultaneous births only to wind up in the middle of the French Revolution. Bud Yorkin, who produced and directed the period farce, likes to think of the film as a movie ahead of its time. For one thing, neither Wilder nor Sutherland had achieved star status at the time the movie was made. Nor had the freewheeling comedy of Mel Brooks, Wilder and Feldman established itself as a bona fide subgenre.

Apparently, Warner Bros., which released the movie, is inclined to agree. At the urging of exhibitors, the company is launching a rerelease of the film, complete with a new advertising campaign, today in Kansas City. Should the experiment take, then "Start the Revolution Without Me" will move on to other cities.

Yorkin, who will have six television series on the air when the new season begins, has not abandoned movies.

Heading his list of projects in development is a comedy about prison life, "Lethal Gas," for which Norman Wexler has written a screenplay. Based on a novel by Ron Kurz, the movie will tell of middle-aged black man in his '50s who strikes up an unlikely friendship with a white guard.

Yorkin himself has collaborated with director Robert Downey on another script, "The Man From Bel-Air," a comic fable about a Hollywood chauffeur mistaken for a