

# Rolling Stone

Resurrections:  
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# ROCK & ROLL



# ROCK & ROLL MOVIES

**THE BEE GEES AND PETER FRAMPTON  
STAR IN SGT. PEPPER • BY ED ZUCKERMAN  
ROCK ON REELS • BY BEN FONG-TORRES  
AMERICAN HOT WAX • BY CAMERON CROWE**

# LONDON

**A CITY BETWEEN PERFORMANCES  
BY JAN MORRIS**

**BILL MURRAY**  
Saturday Night's Maniac  
for All Seasons  
By David Felton

*Rolling Stone*

BY BEN  
FONG-TORRES



DOIN' THE  
HOLLYWOOD  
HUSTLE

ROCK  
ON  
HEELS



*Everybody's a dreamer  
And everybody's a star  
And everybody's in movies  
It doesn't matter who you are.*  
—RAYMOND DOUGLAS DAVIES  
"Celluloid Heroes"

THE FANS,

sitting in bleachers flanking the entrance to the Village Theatre in Westwood, the UCLA section of Los Angeles, were being primed this early March evening. There was Regis Philbin, local TV personality, with his Channel 7 microphone, waiting to interview the stars. There were the valets, waiting for the cars. And the warmup

emcee was telling the fans how the music in this movie, *American Hot Wax*, represented "the roots of the Seventies." The film is, after all, centered on Alan Freed, the Fifties disc jockey and the first white champion of R&B and rock & roll. Now, the emcee was teaching the fans to yell, "Thank you, rock & roll," for the benefit of the TV crew, which was taping a special salute to the movie. The special, *Thank You, Rock 'n' Roll*, was designed to air on the eve of the film's March 17th release.

"Thank you, rock & roll!" the crowd crowed, just like those kids in the Jell-O TV commercial with Bill Cosby. The emcee, of course, wasn't satisfied, so the fans, apparently used to retakes in this town, crowed a second time, then a third, a fourth and a fifth. Then they cheered the arrival of the stars, waited in the bleachers while they watched the film, and cheered again as the stars left for a party at the Riviera Country Club.

The party was staged primarily for the TV show. Cameras hovered around a room that had been turned into an elaborate disco with a three-tiered dance floor. Downstairs, Ray Charles, Smokey Robinson, the Coasters, Dion, Phil Everly, Johnny Mathis, Rita Coolidge and Andy Kaufman, to name a few, made appearances. Upstairs, about 1500 guests, including reporters from all over the West Coast, were mashed together. Allan Carr, who put together the first rock-movie promotion party (for *Tommy*) and has coproduced the film version of the Broadway play *Grease*, made the rounds with Olivia Newton-John, costar (with John Travolta) of *Grease*. Karen Lynn Gorney, Travolta's love interest in *Saturday Night Fever*, was with that film's director, John Badham. Record producer Richard Perry, who has his own Fifties rock movie going (it'll be on CBS-TV as a miniseries), accepted compliments for his appearance as a frazzled record producer in *Hot Wax*.

All this time the family of the late Alan Freed stood close to each other in the main room. Lance Freed introduced his mother, in town from North Carolina for the premiere. She liked *Hot Wax*, she said, although "it was hard to watch." She was backstage at most of Freed's concerts, and the film recaptured those shows, she said.

Still, she and daughter Alana looked uncomfortable in the hustle-bustle. One guest commented on the irony: an expensive party (1500 guests at a cost of thirty dollars a person, plus TV production expenses) for a \$3 million movie about a man who coined the term "rock & roll," who was a staple, as a symbolic defender of rock & roll, in the earliest rock & roll movies (*Rock around the Clock*; *Rock, Rock, Rock*; *Don't Knock the Rock*), and who, after indictments for payola and tax evasion, died in 1965—penniless.

Hollywood, along with the rest of the civilized world, was scared when rock & roll first rumbled onto the scene. The first movie that used the music, *Blackboard Jungle*, characterized teenagers as hoods. But now rock & roll has become respectable. Which means it's making money, in box-office grosses and soundtrack albums from such music-related films as *A Star Is Born* (5 million units sold) or such music-dominated movies as *American Graffiti* (2.5 million units). Last year, aside from *A Star Is Born* and *Saturday Night Fever*, soundtracks and versions of songs

from *You Light Up My Life*, *The Spy Who Loved Me*, *Star Wars*, *Car Wash* and *Rocky* all hit the charts.

As rock manager Irving Azoff put it: "It's straight dollars and cents... the fact that Warner Communications actually earned more money with their record division than their picture division. The numbers exploded in the record business. It was a natural thing to turn to."

All six major studios in Hollywood have musical film projects done, under way or in development.

Paramount, which released *Saturday Night Fever* and *American Hot Wax*, is also behind the \$6 million *Grease*, due in June.

Universal's big splash is *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, with a July 21st release date. The \$12 million Beatles extravaganza, however, will be preceded by a \$2.7 million film about Beatlemania, called *I Wanna Hold Your Hand* and written by two twenty-six-year-olds, Bob Zemeckis and Bob Gale, with Steven Spielberg serving as executive producer. *Skateboard*, which stars budding teen idol Leif Garrett along with forty champion skateboard riders and features music performed by the Jefferson Starship, Dr. John and Mickey Thomas, is already out; *Almost Summer*, with music by members of the Beach Boys, High Inergy and Fresh, has an April 21st release date, and National Lampoon's *Animal House* should be out in August. The comedy about college frat life in the Sixties includes Stephen Bishop in a cameo, serenading a coed at a party with the timeless "I Gave My Love a Cherry." For Sylvester Stallone's *Paradise Alley*, Tom Waits has provided incidental drinking music, including a holiday number, "Hello, Sucker, Merry Christmas." And, for the Yuletide season, Universal will release *The Wiz*, with Diana Ross and Michael Jackson.

Columbia Pictures is distributing *Thank God, It's Friday*, a disco movie starring Donna Summer, in late May, along with *The Buddy Holly Story*.

United Artists will release *The Last Waltz*, the Band's all-star farewell concert of November 1976. The film, which includes performances by Van Morrison, Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, Ronnie Hawkins, Muddy Waters, Neil Diamond, Dr. John and, of course, Renaldo, is due by the end of April. Warner Bros. will issue a three-record set. Also from United Artists: *Hair*, directed by Milos Forman.

Warner Bros. has *Big Wednesday*, set in the Sixties and centered on three beachboys, but not the Beach Boys.

And at 20th Century Fox, a project started years ago by producer Marvin Worth (*Lenny*) as *Pearl*, originally based on the life of Janis Joplin, is now called *The Rose*. It will star Bette Midler, and, according to her manager (and now coproducer of the film), Aaron Russo, is a composite of musical characters circa 1969: "It's Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Janis, Grace Slick, Bonnie Bramlett." With Paul Rothchild (the producer of Joplin's last album) producing the music, *The Rose* will begin shooting in late April on an \$8 million budget. It should be completed by July.



THE CHESTERFIELDS  
IN 'AMERICAN HOT WAX'

