◀ Art fights Jean Fraud Croissant while his comrades battle Helen's forces, eventually winning. Helen eats the Ancient Peach and is transformed into a young girl.

Art returns to the Shur-Li Temple where he discovers that Sue is a member of the Shur-Li Secret Service and was sent to monitor him. Sue explains that the real power of the Ancient Peach resides in its discarded stone, which she plants in the ground. Art and Sue kiss.

Marking the directorial, writing and producing debut of actor Darryl Fong (who also plays a supporting role), Kung Phooey! is a ham-fisted spoof of the martial-arts genre. The lame puns don't end with the title: the action commences at the Shur-Li Temple, while the character roll call includes Sue Shee, One Ton, Lo Fat and hero Art Chew (whose name invariably prompts a "Bless you!"). Equally uninspired, the dialogue often trades on the kind of semantic ambiguities exploited by David Zucker, Jim Abrahams and Jerry Zucker in films such as Airplane! (1980) and The Naked Gun (1988). A typical exchange runs: "Let me go change." "Don't change, I love the way you are.'

Ironically, there's nothing as funny in Kung Phooey! as the centrepiece Enter the Dragon sketch in John Landis' The Kentucky Fried Movie (1977), scripted by Zucker-Abrahams-Zucker, Alongside Bruce Lee movies and the television show Kung Fu Fong targets such recent genre touchstones as Crouching Tiger. Hidden Dragon (martial artists balance on yucca plants) and The Matrix (combatants dangle from visible stunt wires), but the gags raise no more than smiles of recognition. There are also references to The Wizard of Oz and to "Citizen Kane ("Peach-bud") which may escape some of the younger viewers Fong seems so eager to cater for. Apart from the odd juvenile snigger at breasts and balls, the film is far less risqué than The Naked Gun or the Scary Movie pictures. The kind of gross-out humour that saturates the latter is limited here to some protracted spitting and a used tissue being tossed in a soup bowl. More surprising is the paucity of action scenes, although there is a semi-amusing play on chop-socky convention when each member of a gang of thugs is allocated a ticket number to determine when they should attack Art Chew.

In addition to sending up genre clichés, Fong attempts to say something pointed about Asian stereotyping. Responding to the cry, "OK, white people gone," a group of Chinese diners swap their chopsticks for forks, while the climax sees Art Chew dismiss a white Indiana Jones type who turns up to express his generic right to rescue the Asian heroine. Such moments are the most engaging on offer, but in the context of such trite material they don't add up to much. Arriving on the coat tails of the similarly themed (and marginally superior) Kung Pow! Enter the Fist (2001) doesn't do Fong's debut any favours, but neither does its lack of fresh ideas.

Matthew Leyland

## **Laurel Canyon**

USA 2002

Director
Lisa Cholodenko
Producers
Jeffrey Levy-Hinte
Susan A. Stover
Screenplay
Lisa Cholodenko
Director of Photography
Wally Pfister
Editor
Amy E. Duddleston
Production Designer
Catherine Hardwicke
Music
Craig Wedren

©Kuleshov Productions, LLC Production Companies
A Sony Pictures Classics release in association with Good Machine International An Antidote Films production A film by Lisa Cholodenko Developed with the assistance of the Sundance Institute Developed in association with HeadOuarters Inc. Executive Produce Scott Ferguson Co-producers David McGiffert Dara Weintraub Antidote Films Staff:

Mary Jane Skalski Takeo Hori Susan Leber Production Supervisor Jim Maceo Production Co-ordinator Tamara Allen Unit Production Manager Scott Ferguson Location Manager Iim Maceo Post-production Supervisor Beau J. Genot Editorial Mensch Caryn Marcus Assistant Directors 1st: David McGiffert 2nd: Stephen Hagen and and: John R. Saunders Script Supervisor Heather Cappiello Casting
Deborah Aquila Tricia Wood

Associate: Jennifer Munoz , Iennifer Smith Camera Operator Mitch Dubin Steadicam Operators Bob Gorelick P. Scott Sakamoto **Motion Control** Photography Lee Ford Parker Special Effects . Co-ordinator: Larry Fioritto Technician: Virgil Sanchez outer Animation Martin Garner
Associate Film Editor Hilary Schroeder **Art Director** Stephanie Gilliam Set Decorator Gene Serdena Artwork Provided by Sia Arvai Chad Attie Kyle Boorman Kris Cox John Goetz

Michael Haber

Michael Hobley

Michael Manheim René Norman

ADR

Loop Group:

Beth Wernick

Paul Mercier

Mandy Allen

Recordists:

Ieremy Kidd

Helene Slavin

Dorit Thies

Master Scenics Eric Reichardt

Craig Muzio

Lavout Board Darin Moss Costume Designer Cindy Evans Deborah Myles Davis **Make-up** Ben Nye Jr Key Make-up Artist Melanie Hughes-Weaver Hair Department Head Voni Hinkle **Key Hair** Shari Perry Main Title Sequence Designed/Produced by Big Film Design **Fnd Titles** F-Stop, Inc Ian's Band Vocals: Alessandro Nivola Guitars: Imaad Wasif Mike Andrews Bass: Lou Barlow Keyboards: Greg Kurstin Drums Russell Pollard Joey Waronker Music Supervisor Karyn Rachtman Music Co-ordinator Latashia Deveaux Ian's Band Produced by

Mickey Petralia

Lisé Richardson

Fred R. Vogler

Music Recording Engineer

Original Score Mixers Lee Mars

Music Editor

Lee Mars
Craig Wedren
Soundtrack
"Shade and Honey",
"Someday I Will Treat
You Good" – Ian's Band;
"Quartet (The Lark)" by Hayden, - OGM Studio Group; "How Do You Sleep" – Anna Waronker; "Harmony" – Clinic; "The Shame of Life" – Butthole Surfers; "Good Time" - Leroy: "My Only Love" – Roxy Music; "Oscar Brown" - Baxter Dury, includes a sample of "Oh Sweet Nothin"; "In a Funny Way" Mercury Rev; "Do It Again" - Steely Dan: "Crawling" – Scapegoat Wax; "Do You Know What I Mean" - Lee Michaels; "What's My Name" - Jocaine: "Planet Queen" by Marc Bolan – T Rex; "Chateau Ramble" - Daniel Lanois Mark Linkous, Justin Meldal-Johnson: "Tear Off Your Own Head (Doll Revolution remix)" Elvis Costello: "Ma Recontre" – Bertrand Burgalat; "C'est si bon" Eartha Kitt; "It's a Wonderful Life" -Sparklehorse; "Bonnie and Clyde" – Serge Gainsbourg, Brigitte Bardot Sound Design/Supervision Frank Gaeta Production Sound Mixer Steve Nelson Re-recording Mixers Marc Fishman Joe Barnett Recordist Matt Dubin Dialogue Editor Jed Dodge Sound Effects Editors Javier Bennassar Alec St. John

Emalie McCullough
Mixer:
Bruno Frasca
Foley
Artist:
Phyllis Ginter
Mixers:
Mary Erstad
Marilyn Graf
Computer Consultant
John Monsour
Medical Technical Adviser
Reef Karim
Bioinformatic Consultant
Stan Nelson
Stunt Co-ordinator
Buddy Joe Hooker
Animal Trainer
Mathilde De Cagny

Frances McDormand Christian Bale Sam Kate Beckinsale Natascha McElhone Alessandro Nivola Ian Louis Knox Barlow Fripp Russell Pollard Rowan Imaad Wasif Dean Mickey Petralia Mickey Melissa De Sousa Claudia Alexandra Carter Darla Michelle DeMirjian China Rick Gonzalez Wyatt Dennis Howard Mr Elliot Catherine McGoohan

Mrs Elliot

Judith Montgor

Patricia Place

Willo Hausman Grea Wolfson Brandy Nightingale Cambridge party guests Catharine Scott stewardess Marcus Ashley Tom

Lyle Kanouse Marcia Cholodenko hospital patients Gina Doctor Gloria Lauri Johnson landlord Tom Griffiths manager Reef Karim ER doctor Lou Cutell elderly man Zeus elderly man's dog Nick Kiriazis Justin Heidi Sulzman Laura Ariel Felix Mark Marie Blanco Debby Ted Koland room service guy Philip Pavel concierge Mark Rogerson doctor Justin Meldal-Johnsen

Certificate
12A
Distributor
Columbia TriStar Films
(UK)
9,273 feet +0 frames
103 minutes 2 seconds

Dolby Digital Colour by FotoKem

soft rocker Mark Linkous

Daniel Lanois

The present. Engaged to be married, medical students Sam and Alex leave Harvard for LA, where Sam is to complete his residency at a noted psychiatric institute and Alex is to finish her dissertation. They plan to stay at the empty home of Sam's mother Jane in Laurel Canyon. On arriving, however, they discover that Jane, a record producer, is staying at the house with a band whose single she is working on. Ian, the lead singer, is Jane's new boyfriend. Unhappy with the arrangement and disapproving, as ever, of his mother's lifestyle, Sam begs Jane to keep her behaviour lowkey in front of demure Alex.

At the clinic, Sam meets Sara, a beautiful fellow resident. As Sam's work and relationship with Sara grow more intense, Alex is increasingly attracted to Jane's rock 'n' roll world. One night, when Sam is out with Sara and colleagues, Alex spies Ian and Jane drunkenly skinnydipping in the pool; she joins them, eventually kissing Ian, then Jane. Meanwhile Sara and Sam kiss, but Sam leaves, remaining faithful to Alex. The next day Ian writes a ballad he hopes will be the hit single his band needs.

Ian checks into a hotel; after a party there, he, Jane and Alex end up in bed. Sam unexpectedly arrives; infuriated, he punches both Ian and Jane, then argues violently with his mother. The next day, Alex and Sam try to patch things up, and Jane speaks candidly to her son of her failure as a parent, despite her love for him.

Whenever the uptight and the hip are thrown together in a movie, we can safely assume that cool will in most cases prevail. Barely into this film, we're flown economy class from a tight-assed Ivy League garden party to mom's bongsmokin', skinny-dippin' LA hideaway, and director Lisa Cholodenko (High Art) makes sure that's where we'd all rather be. Boo for whingeing Harvard med student Sam and his brainy girlfriend with the personality bypass, Alex. Hurray for foxy, friendly, straight-talkin' mom Jane, played by Frances McDormand. It's a plot/character set-up straight out of Absolutely Fabulous: hippie parents breed boring kids – so what's a mother to do?

Having decided this movie was hers, McDormand is ravishing in every way - despite having been cast against type, in the antithetical role to her panicky mom in Almost Famous. She's sexy, earthy, so at ease with her body that her affair with a man half her age is delightfully believable, as are her contradictions. Den mother to all, she is unable to nurture her own son; health-conscious fruitjuicer, she chain-smokes with gusto. Meanwhile, blandly perfect Sam and Alex drive or jog through the Canyon like Brad and Janet in The Rocky Horror Picture Show. Kate Beckinsale is so robotic as the budding Stepford wife Alex that she practically isn't there; Christian Bale is much better, adding layers of festering resentment to the Ken-doll role of Sam. Even so, when stunner Sara gets all hot for Sam, you're mystified as to why. The allegedly steamy conversation between wannabe adulterers Sam and Sara only slows the movie down: McDormand is far sexier simply eyeing her young beau lustily by the pool. With two beautiful but remote women as the leading man's love interests, the film could have spiralled into an emotional black hole. Yet Laurel Canyon keeps us watching - perhaps because it's such a pleasure to see a relaxed Frances McDormand really enjoy herself in a Coen-free film.

As an unexpected sub-theme, Laurel Canyon touches interestingly on the redemptive potential of one's work. Mother and son have more in common when they realise not just their curiosity for sexual novelty, but also their ambition. Everybody is a better person on the job than in private life: Jane is a dedicated, accomplished record producer, down at the clinic, Sam is confident and sensitive. Even Jane's rock-band boyfriend Ian shows more emotional maturity when he's singing than when he's relaxing at home, chasing the girls.

There are many sequences of Jane at work, and it is through these, above all, that Cholodenko rallies support for her strong, successful, no-bullshit heroine; it's far harder to work up sympathy for the academic, loveless couple, much less for the whiny, thankless son. As Sam complains about his mother's lifestyle, you can't help thinking it was her hardearned, rock 'n' roll cash that got him through Harvard. For such a groovy movie, the message here is pretty corny: you're all heart mom — even if it's underneath an AC/DC T-shirt.

Gilda Williams

watthew Leyland