

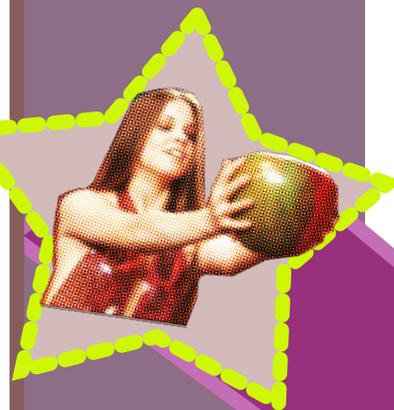
1980: THE YEAR THE MUSIC DIED

I picture studio execs and artistic types around the late 70's lamenting about the lack of the musical as a dominating force in '70s cinema, thinking that the bright and shining dream of the '80s would be fulfilled with singing dialogue and characters who could express all their emotions via the magic of expressionistic dance...not so much. These "musicals" all came out within the year of our Lord, 1980. Think about that... How did the musical ever return if this was what we were offered? Some good stuff, some awful stuff, but its all worth seeing so you can tell others the good news.

THE APPLE □

Our list starts off with easily the weirdest, most off-putting musical since *The Terror of Tiny Town*. Cannon films head honcho Menahem Golan took the directorial reins of this film adaptation of a never produced musical with lyrics entirely in Hebrew. Filmed in beautiful West Berlin, where even the grass is the color of concrete, *The Apple* is set waaaay in the future, right around 1994, where a fiendishly evil record producer named Mr. Boogalow has already achieved supreme dominion over the '90s, but now he has set his sights on Alphie and Bibi, two amazingly bland white people, with literally no discernible talent other than looking as uncomfortable as you will feel while watching them. The Adam and Eve metaphor is so blazingly obvious, that when a hippie version of G-O-D (*spoiler alert*) shows up with a flying Bentley to take Bibi and Alphie out of Boogalow's (who's dressed like a '60s Dracula) clutches, it seems like the most reasonable end to this story. Every song is worse than the one before it, and none of them will remain in your head, other than to terrorize your dreams. Absolutely one of a kind, whatever that means. BIM is the way.

by Jamie



XANADU □

The amount of musical and on-screen talent that threw their huge brimmed fur lined disco hats into the ring is actually pretty staggering, seeing what the results were. ELO and ONJ (Electric Light Orchestra and Olivia Newton-John to the newbs) contribute a whole mess of really great songs to what amounts to a roller skating-centric version of the story of the 9 Muses of Olympus, with only a few cringe worthy numbers that make you forget that the majority of the musical scenes are actually fairly toe-tapping. ONJ's love interest, with whom she falls immediately in love and decides to be his muse, leaves a lot to be desired. She seemed better off as a 2-dimensional painting than trying to act interested in him. Gene Kelly seems to get a pass no matter how bad his scenes are at times. If you can get past all the early '80s smeared all over the camera lens, or if your love for ONJ or ELO is strong, you might find enough to make this a favorite to inflict on others with a smile on your face.



CAN'T STOP THE MUSIC □

But you'll wish somebody would, as well as turn off the picture. No matter how hard you'll try, this picture post card downtown musical about Manhattan in the very early '80s seems as if a race of alien beings, with no idea how humans act, made this slice of alternate fan fiction concerning the holy birth of cultural phenoms The Village People, and all the trappings that come with it. Bruce Jenner, Valerie Perrine, and Steve goddamn Guttenberg, are the Greenwich Village denizens that are lucky enough to see the magic of a cop, Indian, construction worker, army private, cowboy, and a young man who enjoys leather wear and handlebar 'staches, coming together to make some of the most danceable awful music since... well anytime in audible history. I actually thought the best scene was Guttenberg in a tight half shirt roller skating through the city during the opening credits, but I hadn't seen anything until pretty much the entire main cast sings and dances their way thru the downtown YMCA with all involved in various states of undress. This is why they make movies...or I am just weird. You decide.



THE BLUES BROTHERS ◻

What should've been an unqualified success artistically and at the box office turned out to take an extreme amount of heat due to the massive amounts of money (at the time) for a musical comedy and huge nightmare that the production turned out to be. John Landis coming off *Animal House* to direct a movie starring John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd singing and dancing their way into our collective hearts, with a supporting cast of the most talented and famous R&B artists not just from back then, but *OF ALL TIME*, seemed like a no brainer, especially with Jake and Elwood Blues appearing on *SNL* a few times, but as with many Hollywood projects, the cocaine was just too strong back then for making good decisions production wise. Nobody ever, either before or since, had felt that the missing ingredients that every musical lacked were unending car chases and highway smash ups, whenever nobody was singing. That being said, its all very entertaining, Belushi and Aykroyd are great in their prime, and most importantly, Landis films the car chases *AND* musical numbers with a contagious sense of joy, and the more time we spend with Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, And James Brown, the better we are as a people. All that plus a Spielberg cameo.



POPEYE ◻

Robert Evans stopped narrating his own amazing life for a moment to produce this big screen musical version of everyone's favorite huge forearmed sailor man. Evans and Paramount Pictures were upset that *Annie* got bought by another studio, so *Popeye* was the next best thing, right? Makes sense to me. Noted important literary type Jules Feiffer wrote the script which ensnared the great (less appreciated in 1980 though) Robert Altman as director and Robin Williams and Shelley Duvall as Popeye and Olive Oyl respectively. Filmed entirely in Malta (you can still visit the incredible sets) like all great American movies, this one went out of control with money and outsized artistic dreams of squeezing spinach out of a can directly into your mouth, and with songs by the great Harry Nilsson that were intended to be sung live on set, like nobody called Bogdanovich and asked how it went for him on *At Long Last Love*. This movie may have aimed too high, trying almost to do too much for the early 80's, greatness within its spinach flecked grasp.



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