

FDC 50202

FILM THREAT

THE OTHER MOVIE MAGAZINE®

SPECIAL SUMMER ISSUE



THE FLINTSTONES

John Goodrock
as Fred



**PEDRO
ALMODÓVAR**

The King of Kink



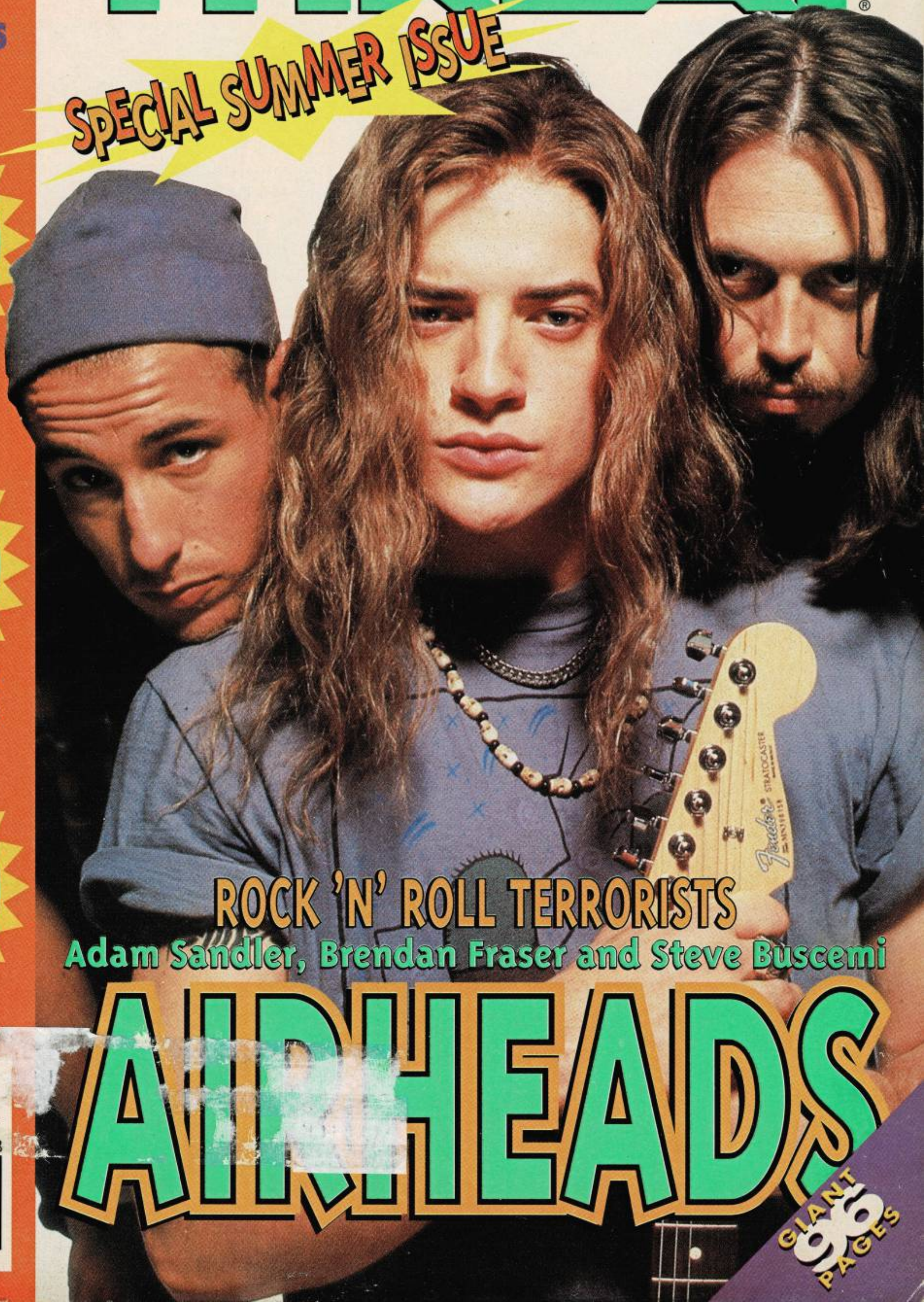
HIGHLANDER III

Van Peebles Picks
Up the Sword



THE MASK

Lean, Mean & Gree



ROCK 'N' ROLL TERRORISTS

Adam Sandler, Brendan Fraser and Steve Buscemi

AIRHEADS

Issue 17 • August 1994
\$4.99 U.S./Can. • £2.95 U.K.



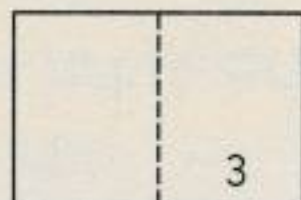
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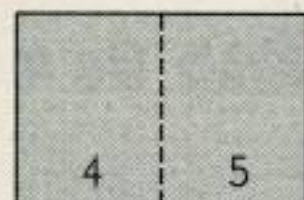


cover

Metal!
The sadistic director behind *Heathers* creates a heavy-metal fairy tale called *Airheads*.

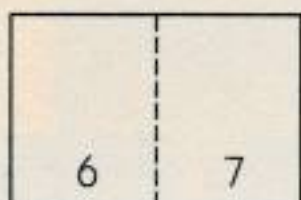


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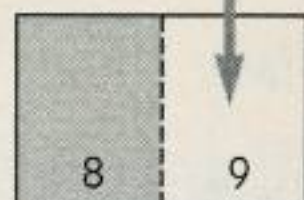
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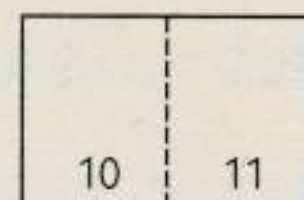
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hate mail
Letters from readers that will entertain and scare you all at once.

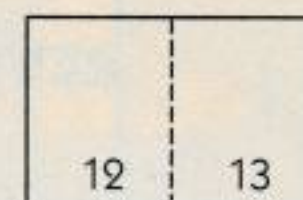


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editorial
Insights? Nah, Gore just spills his guts.



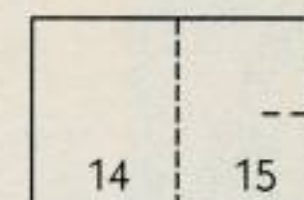
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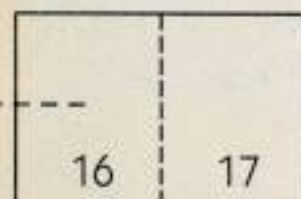
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popcorn

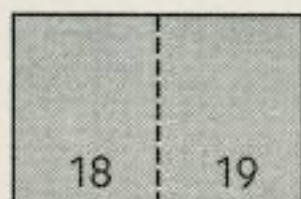
Try to chew on these tasty morsels without choking. Did Quentin Tarantino steal his premise for *Reservoir Dogs* from the Hong Kong actioner *City on Fire*? Read our complete investigative report with photographic proof, plus munch on *Highlander III*, visits to movie sets and other cool and nifty info-bites for the brain.



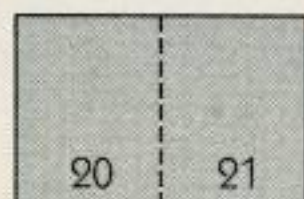
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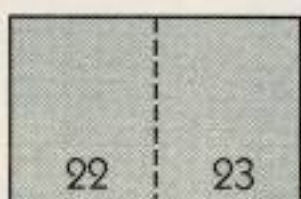
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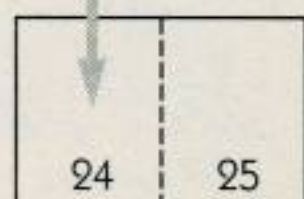


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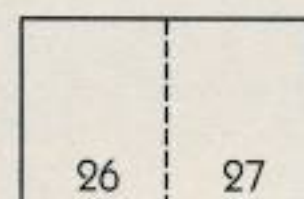


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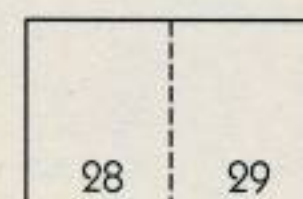
the ny underground film festival
The first in a new column about film festivals takes us to New York for one of the most radical. Is urine really the official smell of the Big Apple? Bon appétit!



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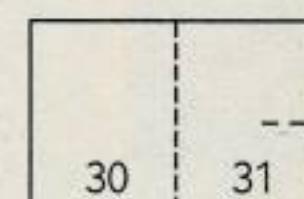
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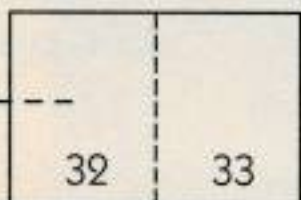
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the summer summit

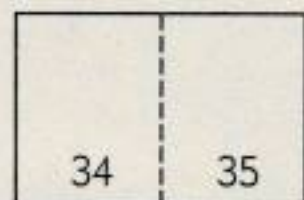
Care to read about the summer movies for 1994? If not, move ahead 12 spaces or read the scoop on *The Flintstones*, *The Shadow* and *The Mask* plus sequels, sequels and more sequels!



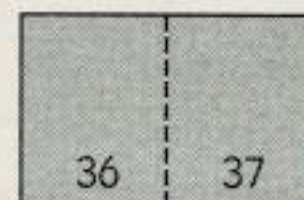
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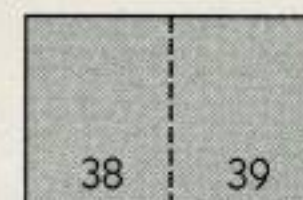
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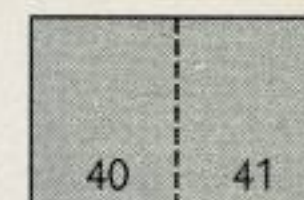
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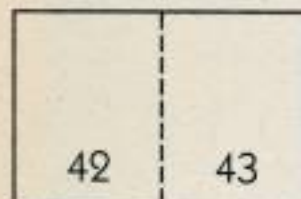
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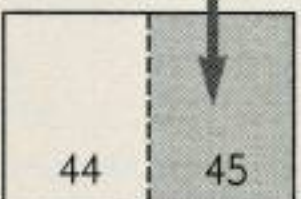
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the king of kink

Take a peep at Spanish director Pedro Almodóvar's perverse pictures. Our comprehensive retrospective should compel you to run, not walk, to the video store. Plus Pedro's women are hot, hot, hot!

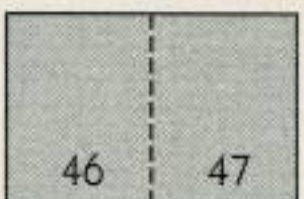


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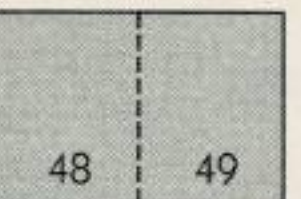


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half japanese
Learn about the making of the true-to-life documentary *Half Japanese: The Band That Would Be King*.



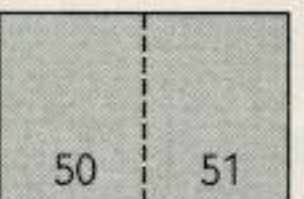
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airheads

Will Michael Lehmann's rock 'n' roll comedy *Airheads* make up for crap like *Hudson Hawk*? C'mon, give the guy a break. Remember, he did make *Heathers*.



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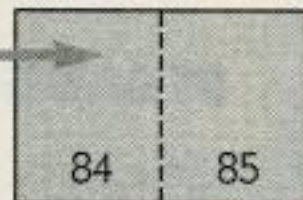


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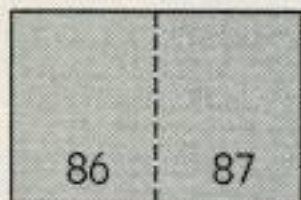
the final cut reviews

Get ready for change as FT introduces our brand-new review format and rating system. Learn about The World's Fastest Movie Reviews™ and the meaning of the E-Value™.

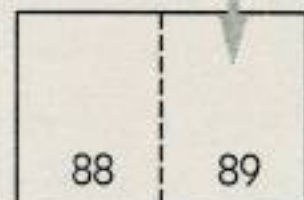
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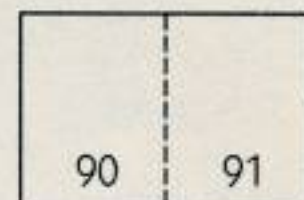


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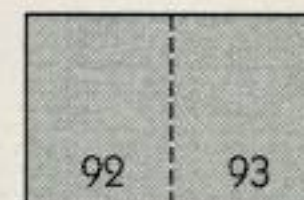
wicked city
Yep, Japanese animation sure is wacky. Where else can you see sexy women mutate into spider-like creatures and still look good in lingerie?



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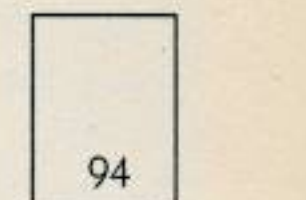
underground

If it's sick and demented, you'll read it here first. Can you take it? Aw, c'mon, it's fun to be shocked.



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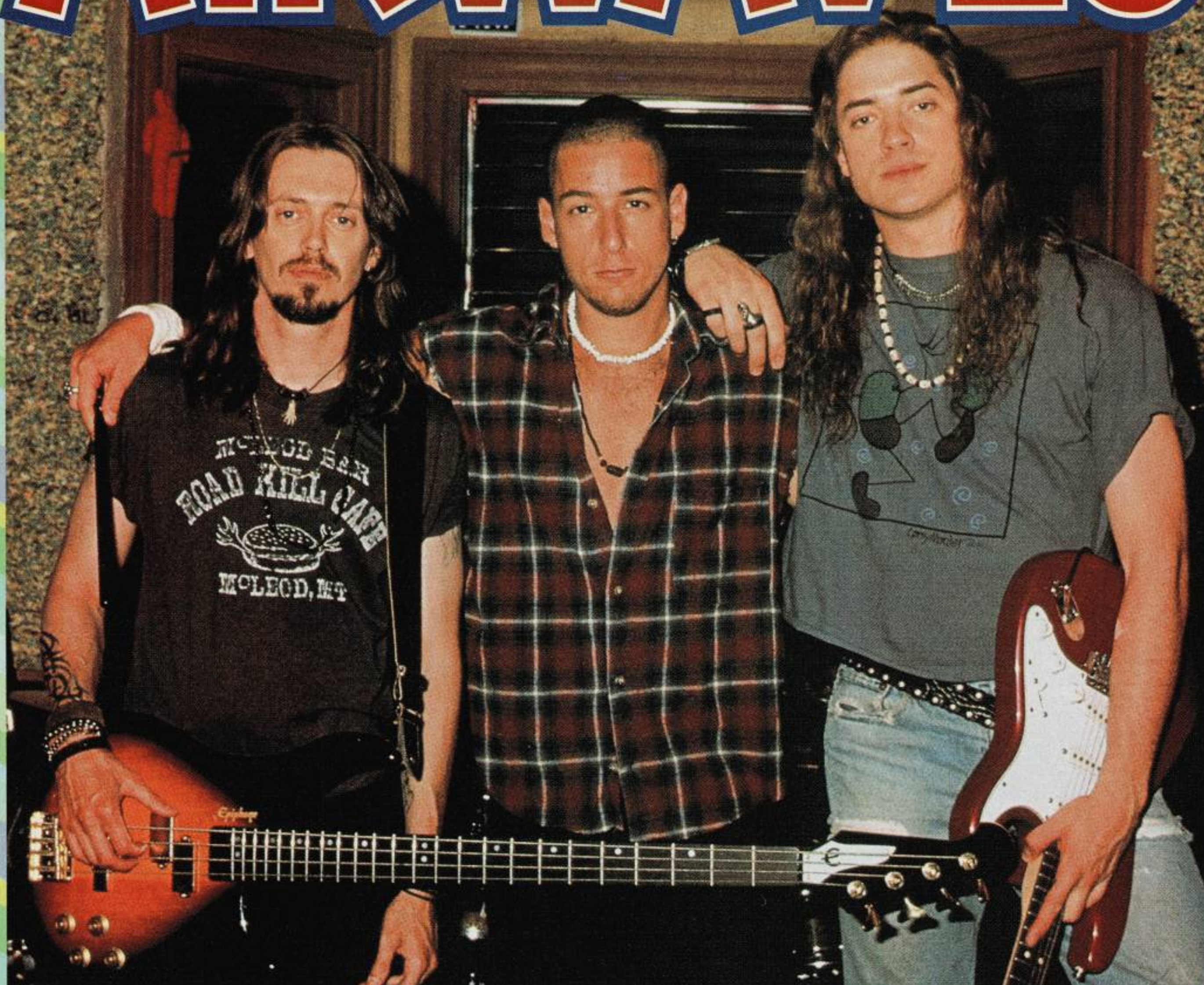
coming attractions
Imagine, Harvey Keitel in another quirky indie flick.



94

go to the movies
Ramones. Need we say more?

WE WANT THE AIRWAVES



Turn down those mellow grooves and crank up the metallic crunch of director Michael Lehmann's rock 'n' roll comedy *Airheads*.

B Y D A V E P A R K E R



Chazz rocks out in his fog-laden metal dream world.

MERIE W. WALLACE

Man, does it ever suck being a frustrated heavy-metal musician. You know you've got talent. And, hey, with those tight leather pants, big, poofy hair, and thoughtfully placed oh-so-tribal tattoos, you know you've got the look. But, no one seems to listen to that demo you slaved over for weeks. How can you break into the business and make those giant bucks you deserve? When are all those peroxide-infectious gals gonna start falling all over you? When is someone gonna produce a movie about how hard it is to make it big in heavy metal?

Well, put down that Gibson, trade in some old Aerosmith CDs for cash and skedaddle over to the nearest multiplex. Finally, there's a movie all about you!

Yes, **AIRHEADS** is here!

HELLO, YOU'RE ON THE AIR...

Whether it be a brutal communist dictatorship or a Hollywood film studio, the people at the top of any power structure have always had a love/hate relationship with rock 'n' roll. They can't stand the music, but pretend they love it since the young folk—whether a massive voting block or a paying film audience—make up a considerable amount of the population.

Hence, you see such incredible—indeed, downright scary—sights as Bill Clinton getting down with the rockin' sounds of Fleetwood Mac. Or aging should've-been-put-out-of-our-misery-years-ago vegetable Frank Sinatra trying to make us forget he predicted rock 'n' roll wouldn't last 40 some-odd years ago by singing with the ultra-hip God-wannabe Bono (when not threatening to punch out skinny, bald, female Irish rock singers who actually have the audacity to voice an opinion). And television channels that are devoted to nothing but commercials...er, music videos by really crazy "alternative" rock stars like Whitney Houston, Stone Temple Pilots and Billy Joel.

When it comes to movies, this crass, transparent grab for the attention of the younger generation manifests itself in two ways. The method most often used is by grafting onto a soundtrack "hot" songs that have absolutely nothing to do with the film itself. Movie executives realize that when the gullible public sees that a band's song is on the soundtrack, there is an assumption that the band is somehow endorsing the movie, even if, as in most cases, they haven't even seen it.

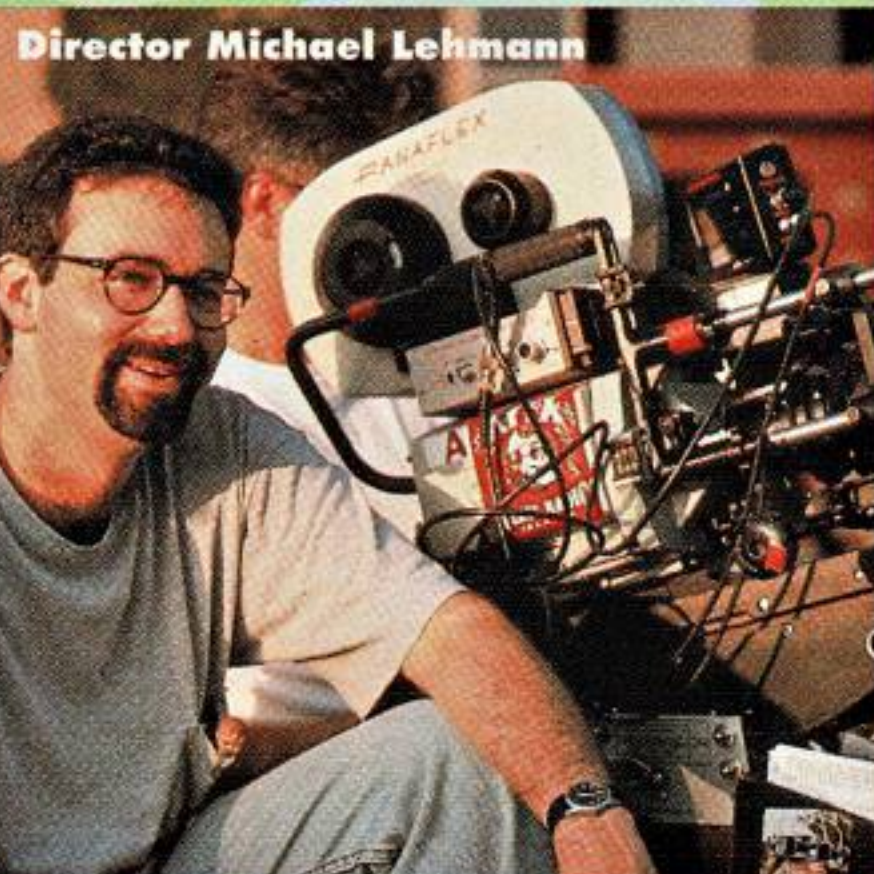
The second approach is to actually make a movie about (or related to) rock 'n' roll. Of course, Hollywood's version of rock can be a little different than that of those under the age of 35. (Remember Bette Midler's *The Rose*?) And, heavy metal, with the exception of Rob Reiner's *This Is Spinal Tap*, has definitely been neglected over the years. Thankfully, this situation is about to be remedied.

WE'RE GONNA BE PLAYING ALL THE HITS TONIGHT...

Airheads is a comedy about three metalheads, played by Brendan Fraser, Steve Buscemi and Adam Sandler, who break into a radio station in the hopes of getting their demo played on the air. Of course, things end up going badly and the motley

crew is forced to take hostages, thereby not only drawing the attention of record companies, who see a great marketing angle, but also the notice of psychotic policemen, assorted hanger-ons, Beavis and Butt-head and a shitload of busty bimbos. Just the thing every rock 'n' roller dreams about.

"I really wanted to show how unbelievably shitty commercial radio is," says screenwriter Rich Wilkes, who's lived the lifestyle he's portrayed on the page. "And how hard it is for anyone to get airplay.



You never hear a band unless they've made some stupid video that's been financed by their big record corporation and that MTV deems acceptable to play 50 fucking times a day. The only other stuff that gets played is 10 to 20 years old."

Oh, yes, the dreaded "classic rock" concept. The bane of every music lover born after 1960. I swear if I hear "Brown-Eyed Girl" one more time...

"These guys are fed up with having the Eagles and Lynyrd Skynyrd forced down their throats on a daily basis," explains Wilkes. "They know that the only way to realize their dreams is to get played on the radio. And since no one at the record companies or the station will even *listen* to their music, they try to make them listen by holding guns to their heads."

Of course, the guns aren't real. After all, these guys aren't evil—just desperate. And no one wants to be held responsible if some brain-dead, mutant offspring of sibling love decides to try this kind of thing at home.

...SO, SETTLE BACK WITH THE COOL STYLINGS OF MICHAEL LEHMANN...

Okay, maybe it's time to cut *Airheads* helmer Michael Lehmann some slack. Yes, he did direct *Hudson Hawk*,

which even the *New York Times* had the foresight to describe as "one of the worst movies ever made." But, he also directed one of the best teen angst movies ever made, *Heathers*. And, he managed to do it without underestimating or pandering to his audience, unlike some other recent Gen X auteurs (yeah, I'm talking to you,

Ben Stiller). So, this thing is right up his alley. Besides, *Hudson Hawk* wasn't really all his fault.

"The whole *Hudson Hawk* thing is very complicated," sighs Lehmann. "And I've never really talked to the press about it. It wasn't that I distanced myself from the film; it's just that the experience of

Friend-ly Alliances

When a film is about rock, it's got to rock HARD. Enter Lonn Friend, the master of metal from Rip magazine, to pump up *Airheads*' crunch quotient.

BY COURTNEY WINFREE

Michael Lehmann walked into executive editor Lonn Friend's lair at *Rip* magazine, looked around at the all-star photo gallery, gold records and CDs, and told Lonn it was exactly how he imagined *Airheads*' radio station set. So, first he borrowed some of the pictures and laminates collected from Lonn's years of tour duty, then hired Friend to put a soundtrack together.

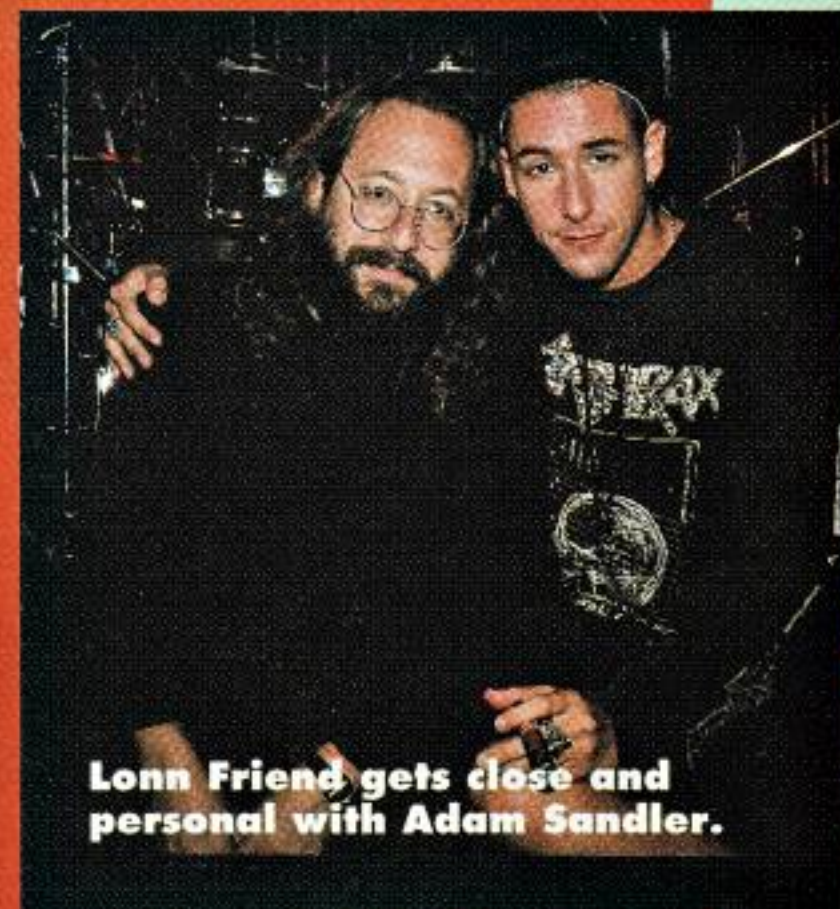
"We started on really great footing. The problem between me and the director [arose] because Michael Lehmann made a heavy-metal comedy but his personal musical taste skews to the alternative. Nobody has the access that I do to all of these bands, but I told them right up front, 'You're not going to get Nirvana, Soundgarden, Pearl Jam. It just won't happen.' Add to that the fact that between the Fox music group, the agents, music publishers and the studio itself, there were more cooks in the *Airheads* musical kitchen than in the mess hall at West Point."

A longtime music industry insider, Friend felt he knew exactly the kind of sound *Airheads* needed. Early last year, he scored a major coup by signing White Zombie to perform in one scene as a club band—before Beavis and Butt-head's approval shot them to stardom and a million-selling CD. As a marketing bonus, Rob Zombie has been performing the original tune "Feed the Gods" on his tour, hyping the movie and telling fans the song will only be released on the soundtrack.

Friend convinced Ugly Kid Joe's Whitfield Crane and Skid Row's Sebastian Bach to join Lemmy from Motorhead (who also has a cameo in the film) on "Born to Raise Hell"—a track released only on an import Motorhead album and one of the key songs of the picture. The bad news is that Bach's management and label have conflicting opinions as to who owns Bach's voice (they think they do). The good news is, Ice-T is ready to step in. "See, I know Whitfield and Sebastian are bastard children of the same parents. They're pot-smoking, hell-raising rockers who worship Lemmy, but Ice-T, Lemmy and Whitfield Crane—that's really a psychotic combination."

Okay, so that combo's weird, but what about Anthrax covering the Smiths' "London"? Other artists making an appearance with new, unreleased tracks include Candlebox, Primus, Dig, Skid Row and Ozzy Osbourne.

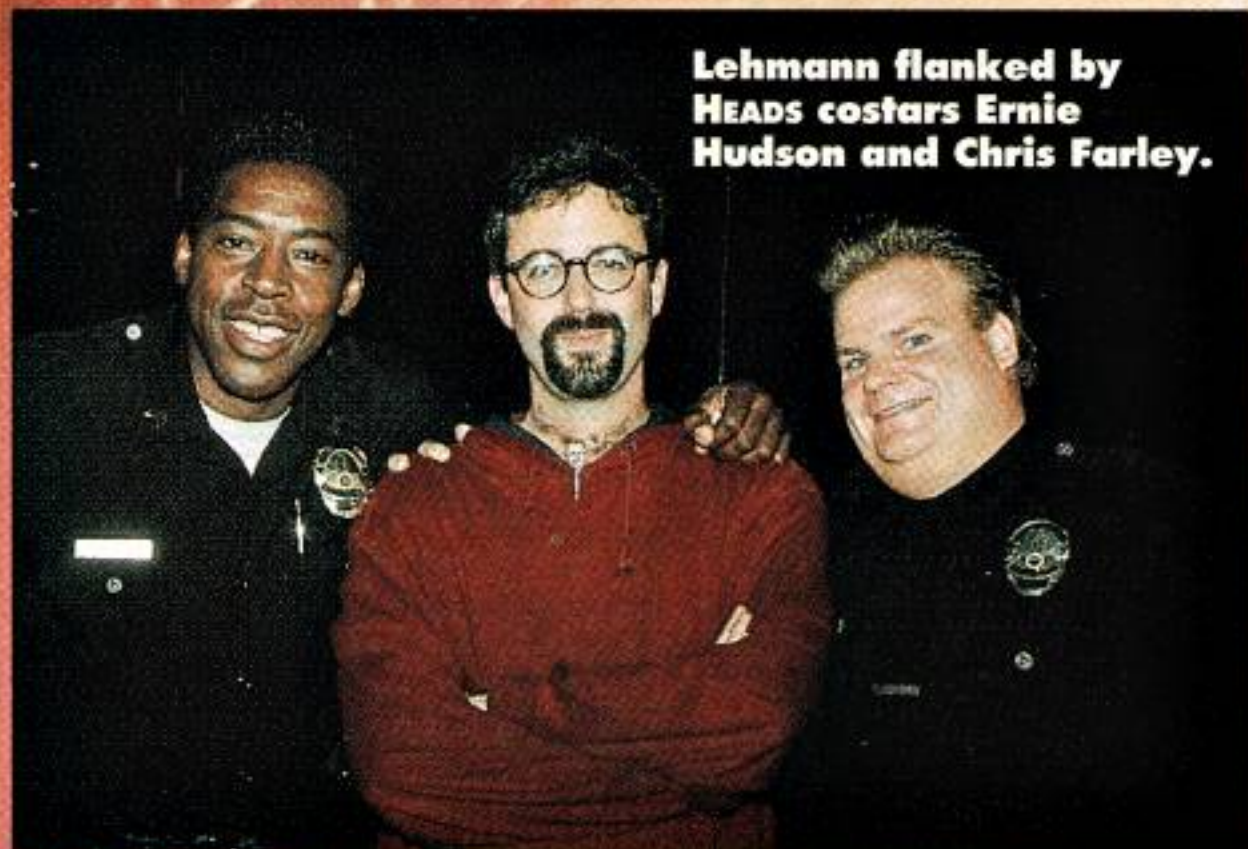
"I believe I've pulled off a great soundtrack, and Happy Walters (*Judgement Night*) coming in at the end really helped out. I would like to go to the screening of this film and have Michael Lehmann come up to me, shake my hand and say, 'I know there was a lot of shit going on, but you did a great job.'"



Lonn Friend gets close and personal with Adam Sandler.



Pre-famous White Zombie performs.



Lehmann flanked by HEADS costars Ernie Hudson and Chris Farley.



Pip and Suzzi (Nina Siemaszko).



making it was so bizarre. I also didn't want to get involved with bashing the people associated with the movie. I was quiet about it because I felt that I didn't make the movie I wanted to make.

"My wife said to me at one point that I was carrying Charles Manson's baby and that I had to bring it to term. And once I got it out there, I could put it up for adoption. That's the best analogy I've ever heard for what I went through."

Lehmann's next project wasn't exactly smooth sailing either. He was the director originally hired to shoot *The Good Son*. But, that was before franchise-spawner/Macaulay's dad Kit

Culkin blackmailed Twentieth Century Fox into casting his extremely untalented offspring in the *Bad Seed*-esque starring role.

"We were two weeks away from shooting and everything was in place. When the word came down that I had to cast Macaulay, I had him read for the part. No slur to him, but I just felt I couldn't make the movie I wanted to with him in the lead role. I didn't feel he was right for the part. [No kidding. —Ed.] I guess I'm really weird in that I feel I have to make movies that I really care about. If I like the script, and I feel that it is in line with my sensibilities and it really appeals

to me, then I'm excited about it and I want to make it.

"I have to say I'm really excited about *Airheads*. I think Rich Wilkes' script is very funny, very true and very satirical," claims Lehmann. "And it was a good challenge as well. It was a tough job for me in that there are all these scenes with so many actors in a small space. It puts a great burden on the actors—for their timing and the ensemble effect. And it's the director's responsibility to make sure that stuff is going well, even if it's just the responsibility of casting the right people. And this cast is most certainly filled with the right people."



...AND HIS BAND OF TALENTED PROFESSIONALS

Besides Brendan Fraser, Steve Buscemi and Adam Sandler as the band, the Lone Rangers, *Airheads* also stars Michael McKean (*This Is Spinal Tap*) as a typically spineless program director, Ernie Hudson (*Ghostbusters*) as a sympathetic cop, Chris Farley (*Saturday Night Live*) as an overeager rookie cop, Joe Mantegna (*Homicide*) as a burnt-out disc jockey, Judd Nelson (*The Dark Backward*) as a record company weasel and Amy Locane (*Cry-Baby*) as a total babe.

The movie also features cameo appearances by such luminaries as Harold Ramis, Lemmy Kilmister, Stutterin' John Melendez and Kurt Loder. All in all, not a bad group to work with, eh?

Says Lehmann, "Everyone is completely believable—especially the band. One look at 'em and you say, 'Hey, I know these guys!'"

They all have the look, but it's Steve Buscemi who really stands out. Imagine a gaunt, youthful Charles Manson, and you pretty much get the picture.

"I'm not really into heavy metal that much," claims Buscemi. "I'm more into jazz and Tom Waits. But the character I play is not alien to me. I've known plenty of guys just like the metalhead I portray."

Although he'd plucked at the bass a few times in some productions for the theater, Buscemi really didn't know how to play his instrument.

"I have no idea if I was any good or not when I played on the theater stage," claims a modest Buscemi. "I'm guessing I wasn't that great. But I was given bass lessons before we started production and I felt very comfortable and I know I'm definitely a lot better. And, since this is a studio film, I didn't have to pay to learn it. They picked up the whole tag!"

Unfortunately, one idea that would have made Buscemi look even cooler, and certainly would have been keeping in synch with the "Fuck the Establishment" tone that runs throughout the film, was nixed by the studio on the first day of shooting.

BUT FIRST, A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR...

You'd think that when a studio hires young creative filmmakers to make a movie about rock 'n' roll, they'd keep their old, out-of-touch, Phil Collins-listening asses out of the picture. But although this was pretty much the case on *Airheads*, there were a few problems.

Chazz and Kayla (Amy Locane) ponder terrorist tactics.



"In the script, the band's wardrobe was very much specified," claims Wilkes. "Steve's character was supposed to wear a shirt through most of the film with the words BLOW ME emblazoned upon it. They kind of mentioned taking it out, but didn't really make a big deal about it, so we had him wear it on the first day of shooting. That lasted all of about five seconds! It can be real frustrating."

"It was *definitely* frustrating at times," agrees Lehmann. "Anything you give in on is not going to be in the movie; it's gone. If you want a character to have a

tattoo on his neck and they say, 'No, you can't do it,' then you can't go ahead and do it anyway. That's why you have to fight the battle if they tell you they don't have the money to do certain things. You have to tell them to find the money because if we don't shoot it, nobody is going to see it."

Lehmann has seen both sides of the coin. His first two films, *Heathers* and the absurd comedy *Meet the Applegates*, were done through the low-rent ranks of New World Pictures and represent the independent way of thinking—while

Hudson Hawk epitomizes the worst a studio has to offer.

"The best way for a creative person to get any power in the movie industry is to make movies that make money," maintains Lehmann. "But that's a double-edged sword because although you get power to make movies that make money, you never get the power to go back and make little oddball, unusual, cappuccino-crowd movies. The people who run the studios know what game they're playing. They are very honest about it and they don't fuck

around. If you want to make movies that aren't studio movies, then don't try to make them at studios. You can't. Would they have been happier with a dumber movie? Maybe. But the dumber movie that sells more tickets and appeals to the lowest common denominator is not a better movie for me."

At least with the studios, you know where you stand. From Day One, Fox contracted for a PG-13 film. Although Wilkes had to soften the language a little, the script has maintained its cutting edge.

"I was really concerned that Fox would water down the script," admits Buscemi. "This is my biggest experience with a studio and I'd heard all the horror stories. But, they really didn't interfere at all. It was gratifying to see."

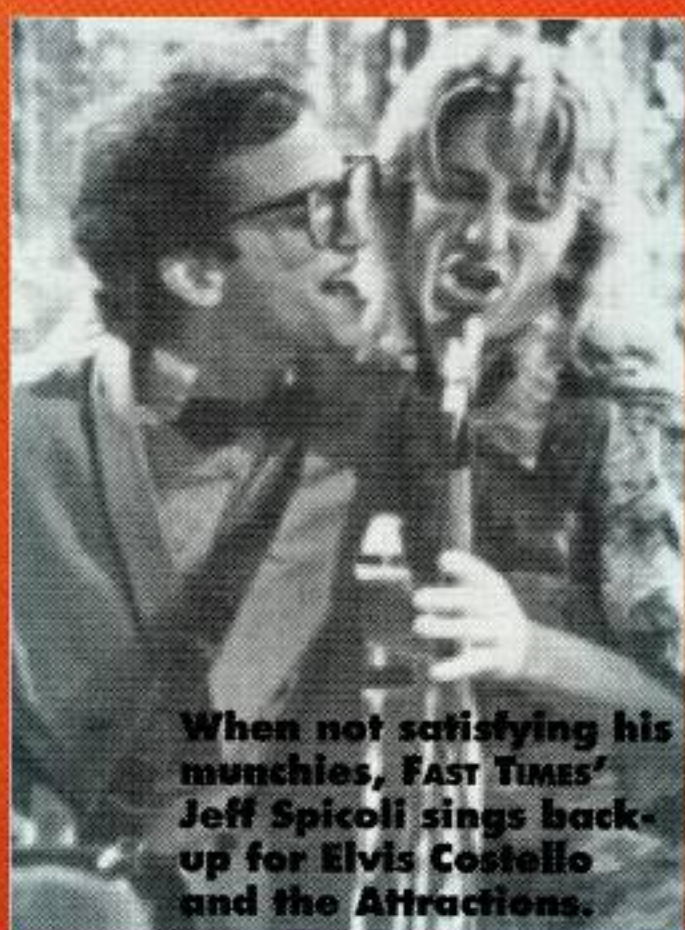
...WHOOOPS! DID I HIT THE SEVEN-SECOND DELAY?

Here's a quick question for ya. How does a movie that contains no explicit sex, no extreme violence, and no uses of the dreaded F-word receive an R rating from MPAA? To tell you the truth, I don't know and neither does anybody else.

"I just don't get it," complains Lehmann. "We had to go back to the



Lehmann goes through the motions with Amy Locane.



When not satisfying his munchies, *FAST TIMES*' Jeff Spicoli sings back-up for Elvis Costello and the Attractions.

FAST TIMES AT RIDGEMONT HIGH

This must-see teen classic portrays the young stoner in his quest for identity and a perfect sack of bud. The only difference between this and its many replicas is that, at the time, Sean Penn was not a 40-year-old clown playing a teenage stoner (i.e., *Wayne's World*), and his character, Spicoli, was one of the few of this genre who actually blew tubes on camera.

ROCK & RO

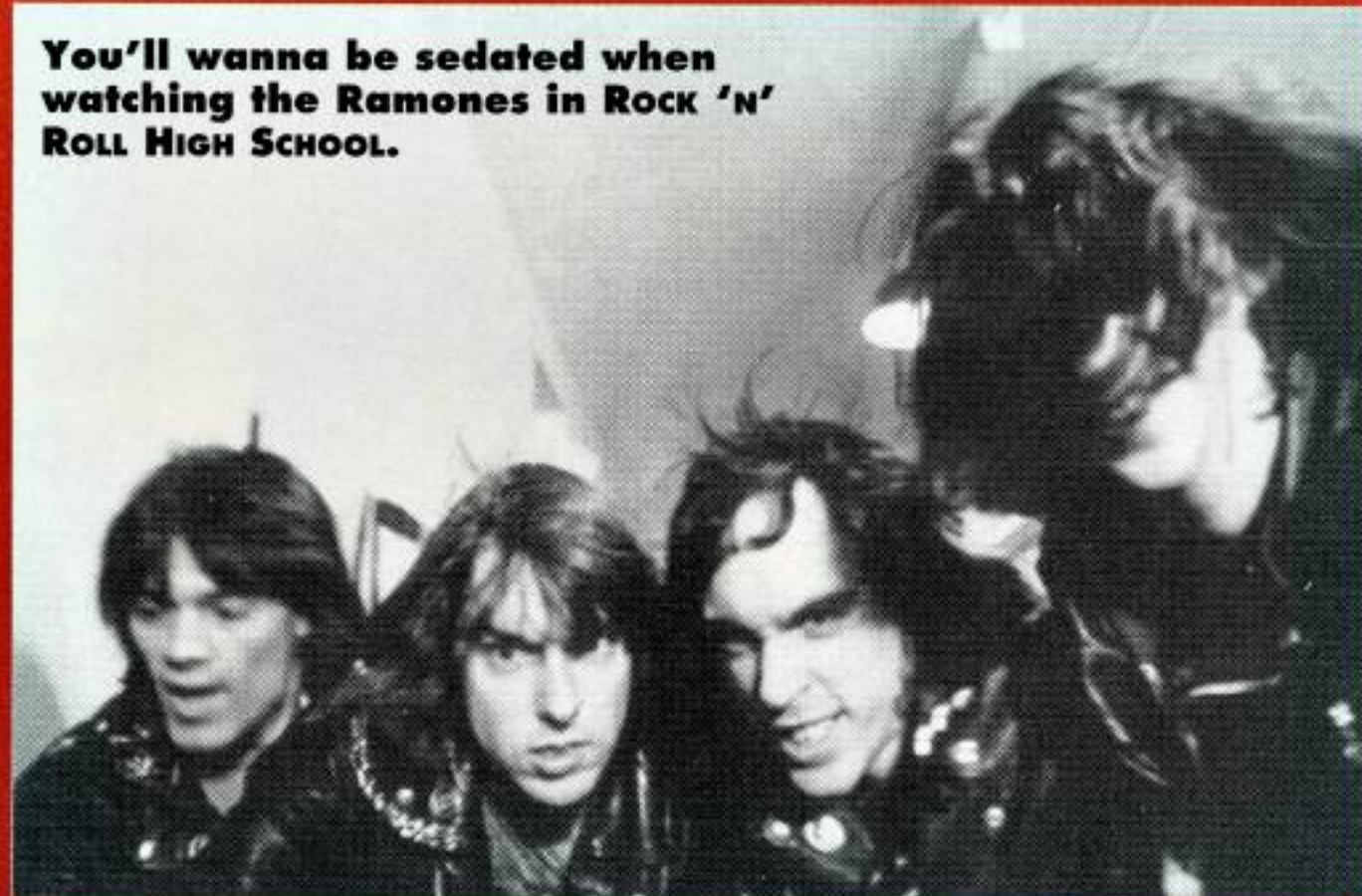
FT recalls some of Airhe

ROCK 'N' ROLL HIGH SCHOOL

A true classic in the minds of those who thirst to hear the speech similarities of punk legend Joey Ramone and "Corkey" from TV's *Life Goes On*. This film is required viewing if only

for the line "Riboflavin, Joey, it's got riboflavin!" But what do you expect from Roger Corman and director Allan Arkush? It also features a delightfully perky PJ Soles as the Ramones' No. 1 fan.

You'll wanna be sedated when watching the Ramones in *ROCK 'N' ROLL HIGH SCHOOL*.



BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS

Far more interesting than the "straight" flick from which it borrowed its name, Russ Meyer's *Dolls* is a bouncy ride through the trials and tribulations of a scantily clad, lesbian-inclined, maximum-breasted girl group. Ponder the true meaning of hypocrisy as you compare scriptor Roger Ebert's current stance against violence in films to the scene he wrote in which a gun is forced into a woman's mouth.

THE DOORS

Oliver Stone's homage portrays the depressing life of the late Jim Morrison. Watch as Jim dedicates his life to drugs and related debauchery. Feel chills

MPAA four or five times because they don't tell you what to cut. You have to do this dance with them and figure it out. As it turned out, most of their objections had to do with verbal references to masturbation. Give me a break! All 13-year-old kids do is masturbate! I really went nuts over this because I do not think that with PG-13 you should censor language at all."

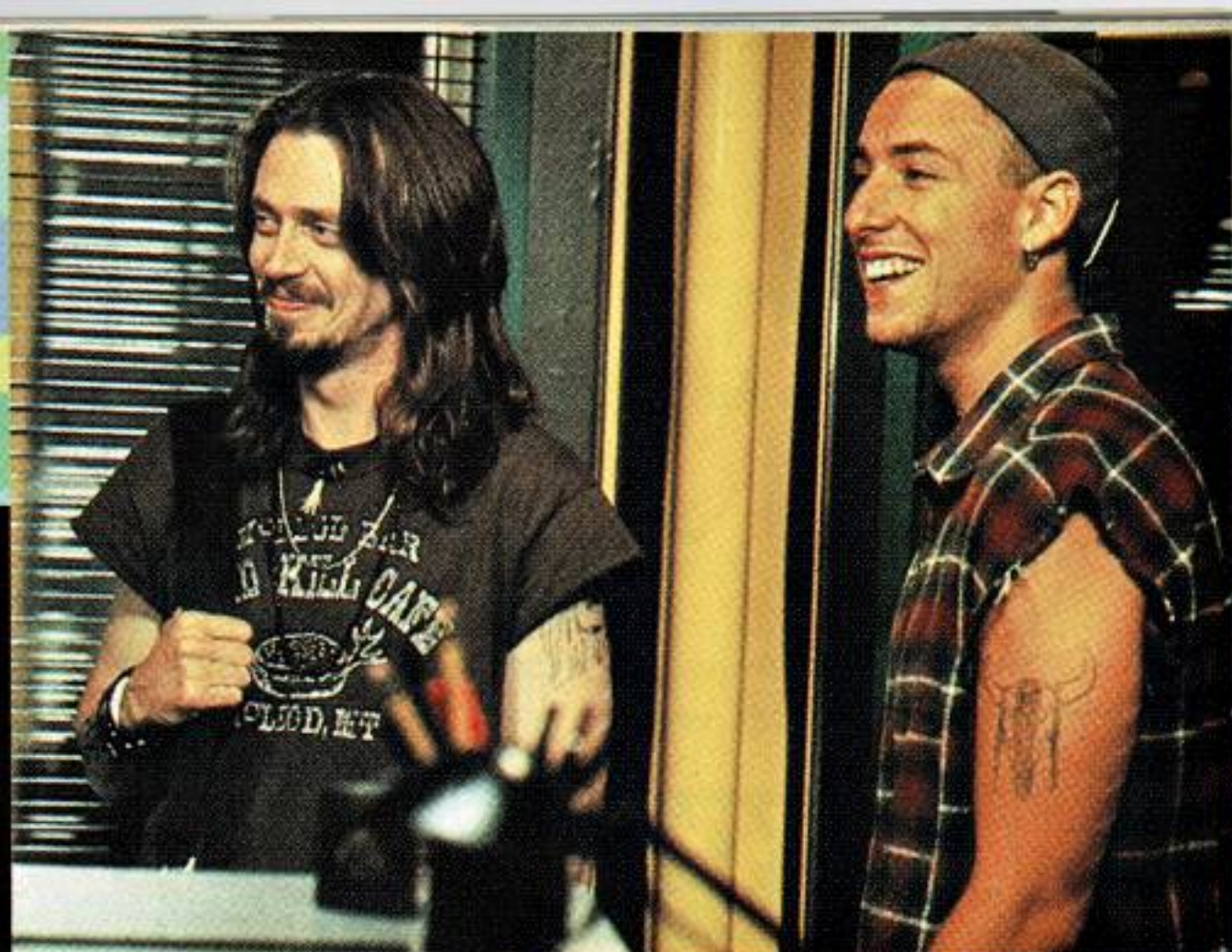
Obviously, the subject of beating off hits a little too close to home for the MPAA. It's easy to imagine Jack Valenti locking himself in a darkened room with the latest offering from Christy Canyon and muttering obscenely to himself, *Oh, you bad, bad girl. Oh, you are so naughty. Daddy's going to have to give you an X rating if you don't be nice*, while polishing his withered war helmet with an intense fury.

"Ah, screw 'em!" yells Wilkes. "Why bother hating them when you know that deep down inside they really hate themselves? Besides, they're nothing compared

to that bitch Janet Reno. Wait till she starts sticking her fingers into the pie. And who knows where those fingers have been!"



Fortunately, Buscemi brushed up on his bass to play Rex.



which features Motorhead, Ozzy Osbourne, Anthrax and White Zombie (who also perform).

However, if too many people see it, it could start a dreaded new trend. Hollywood, always so eager to jump on the next bandwagon, might start making more movies about the rock 'n' roll scene.

Uh-oh.

"Yeah, I kinda feel like I'm caught between a rock and a hard place," moans Wilkes. "On one hand, I'd love to see the film become huge so I could see some money out of it. But, on the other hand, I would dread seeing Tom Cruise starring in the Iggy Pop story!"

OH, ONE MORE THING... ROCK 'N' ROLL!!!

This summer, there's definitely an audience for *Airheads*. Anyone who likes good comedy and/or heavy metal will truly enjoy the film and its soundtrack,

66 RETRO

ads' noted predecessors.

run down your spine as you listen to Val Kilmer imitate Jim singing "L.A. Woman." Gasp in amazement as Jim is found dead from an overdose.

PINK FLOYD—THE WALL

Inspired by ex-Floyd-leader-turned-acid-loon Sid Barret and brought to the screen by Alan Parker, this epic musical stars Boomtown Rats' Bob Geldoff as a rock star who loses his marbles, shaves his eyebrows and sees really bizarre, animated hallucinations. And some comfortably numb toons by Pink Floyd are included as well.

THE GREAT ROCK & ROLL SWINDLE

This kind of true-to-life documentation of a musical money-

pit scandal, devised by Malcolm McClaren, implemented by Julien Temple and known as the Sex Pistols, focuses on punk bad boy Sid Vicious and his constant antics to become an untalented star by vulgar means.

SID & NANCY

Director Alex Cox's definitive portrait of Sid Vicious and girlfriend Nancy Spungen is a breathtaking glimpse into junkie mentality. This is perhaps Gary Oldman's finest two hours. Nancy, what are you up to these days? [Last seen in the PBS series *Tales of the City*. —Ed.]

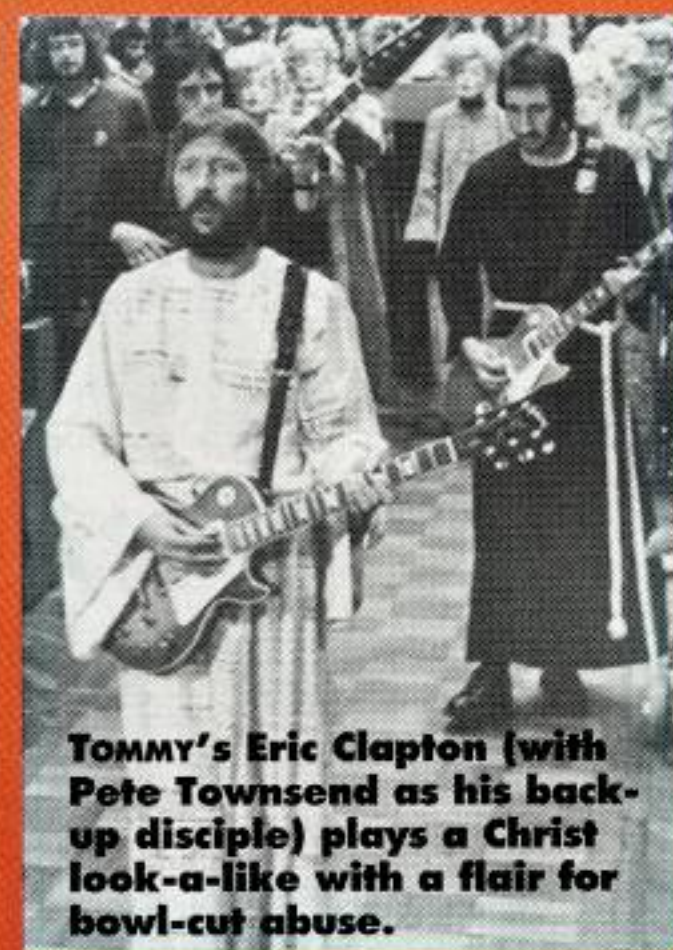
TOMMY

This cinematic rock opera by the Who via Ken Russell is the disturbing but exhilarating story

of a deaf, dumb and blind Roger Daltry, a.k.a. the Pinball Wizard. Keep your eyes open for many amusing cameos, including Elton John, Jack Nicholson and Tina Turner as the Acid Queen.

THE DECLINE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

Before Penelope Spheeris spent time on *Wayne's World*, she encountered such closer-to-home aliens as Black Flag, Catholic Discipline, the Circle Jerks, Fear, the Germs and X in this definitive exposé of the drug-fueled Los Angeles punk scene. Almost as entertaining was her 1988 follow-up, *The Decline of Western Civilization II: The Metal Years*, which



TOMMY's Eric Clapton (with Pete Townsend as his back-up disciple) plays a Christ look-a-like with a flair for bowl-cut abuse.

offered up the Ozzy Osbourne we all know and love: a depressed, fat alcoholic.

EDDIE AND THE CRUISERS

This flick contains none of the following elements: a character named Sid, anyone on acid, or a rock star with a messiah complex. The only similarities that this has to a true rock 'n' roll film is that the band is untalented and the main character allegedly dies.

AIRHEADS

DIRECTED BY

MICHAEL LEHMANN

WRITTEN BY

RICK WILKES

RUNNING TIME:

95 MINUTES

20TH CENTURY FOX

GENRE: METALLIC

COMEDY

THE PLOT: IN A FIT OF DESPERATION A TRIO OF HEAVY-METAL MORONS TAKE OVER A RADIO STATION AND FORCE IT TO PLAY THEIR DEMO TAPE.

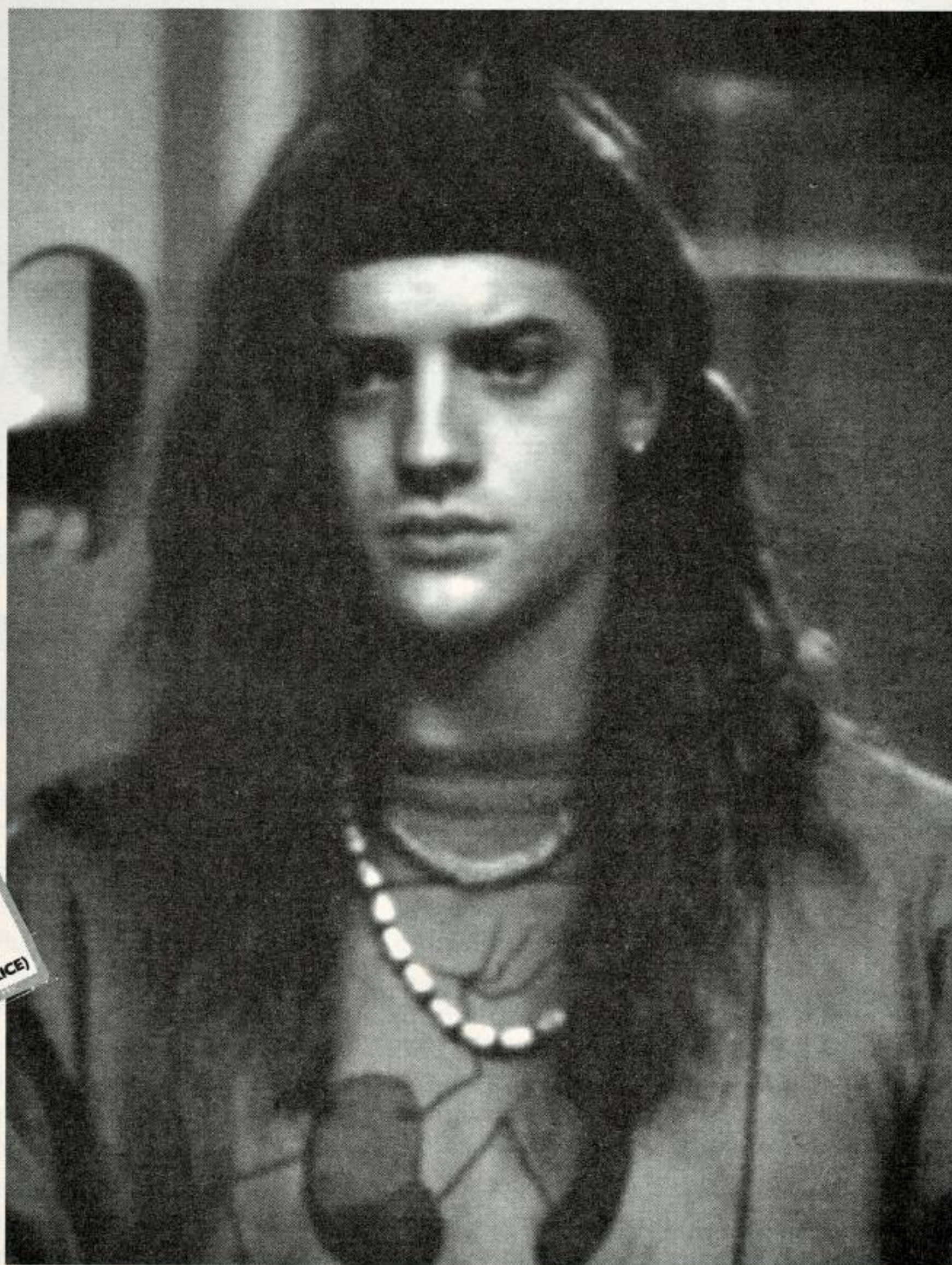
CAST: BRENDAN

FRASER, STEVE BUSCEMI,

ADAM SANDLER

AIRHEADS

By Paul Zimmerman



Like its nebulous title, *Airheads* meanders all over the place and the humor is hit-and-miss, but armed with a bevy of great lines and nine tons of attitude, it's the slyest comedy of the season. While other music-related comedies skirt the main issues and weasel about, *Airheads* names names and goes for the throat. Yes, gang, here's that rarest of the species, a picture with teeth.

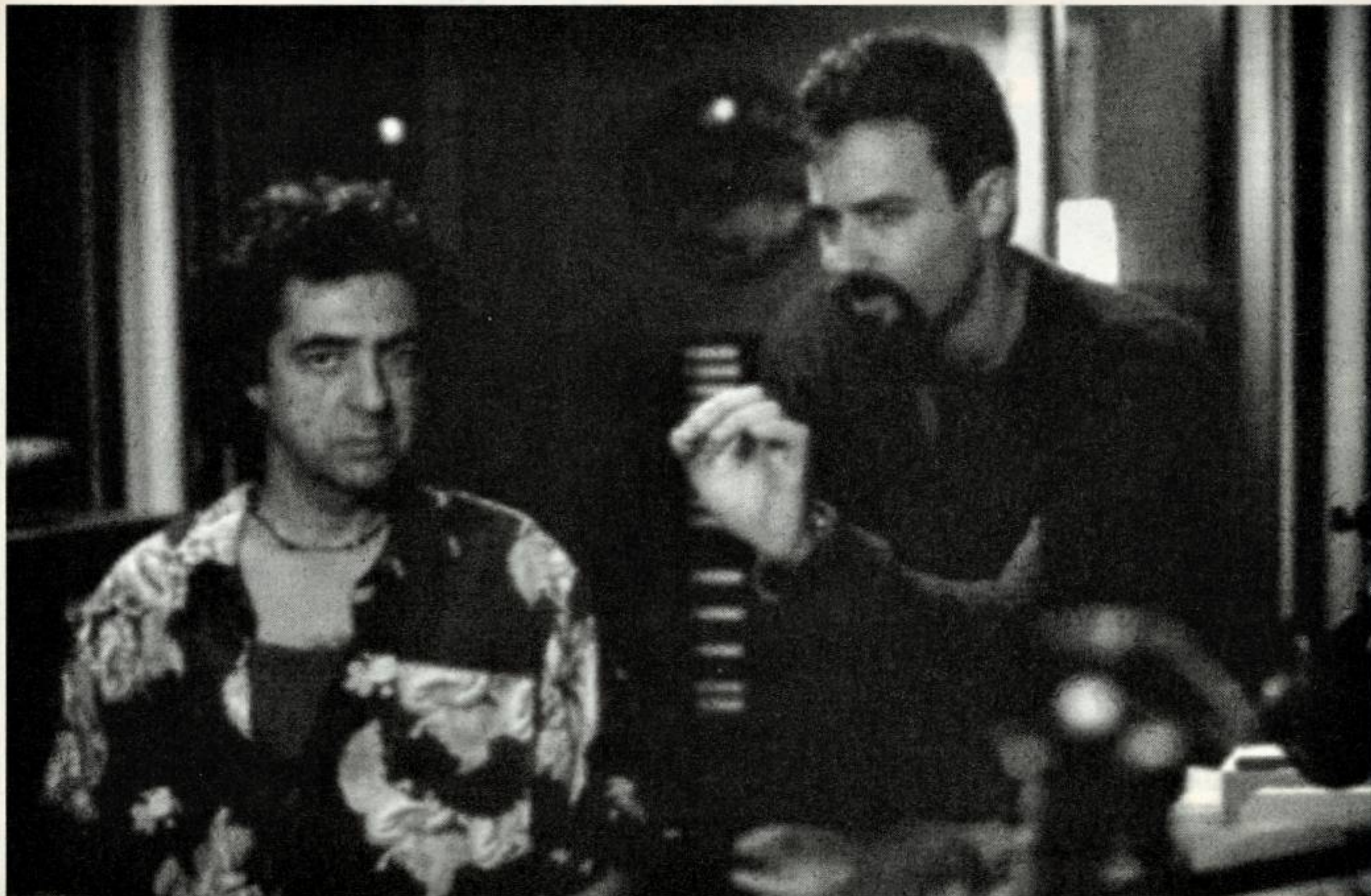
Director Michael Lehmann seems a bit pissed off, and it lovingly shows in every frame. At once one of Hollywood's Young Turks and a grizzled veteran, Lehmann has already experienced elation (*Heathers*), confusion (*Meet the Applegates*) and devastation (*Hudson Hawk*). He's back on more familiar ground (angry, confused and funny youth), and needless to say, it's his best work since *Heathers* set such a high standard five years ago.

From the first scene you know you're in for a sure-handed and vicious ride. In an amazing 90-second uninterrupted take, the camera follows our dimwitted hero, Chazz (Brendan Fraser), up stairs, down hallways and into the most feared sanctum of the fledgling metal musician: the record company. There he encounters a sleazy record exec, played to perfection by Judd Nelson. Desperate after being booted from the record company and his girlfriend's apartment, Chazz unites with his bandmates Pip (Adam Sandler) and Rex (Steve Buscemi). As the hapless members of the Lone Rangers, they're the most convincing and laughable band to ever grace the silver screen. (One minute of *Airheads* rings truer than all of *Wayne's World*.) Long on enthusiasm and short on talent, the trio takes over the local radio station, and then the real fun begins. It purports to take a look at the

frustrations of the rock world, which means that everybody from the leads to the smallest walk-ons is going to get the third degree. Many musicians are morons, record companies are run by jerks, and radio sucks—hardly big news. But definitely good cannon fodder. Along the way our three guitar-driven stooges run into a dizzy DJ (Joe Mantegna), a go-

like the Breeders and Motorhead are welcome and logical participants; and just to show the filmmakers know their stuff, also featured are dead-on cuts by two of the “Three Rs” of rock ‘n’ roll: the Replacements and the Ramones.

While the crisp dialogue more than makes up for a rather pedestrian plot, the film ends not with a bang, but with a



with-the-flow program director (Michael McKean) and a veteran cop (the terminally underused Ernie Hudson). Toss in a sprinkle of *Saturday Night Live* vets and assorted other “this film looks like fun” guest stars and you have the hipster cast of the year.

And while there’s an enormous amount of acting pyrotechnics all firing at the same time, many deserve special recognition. Fraser brings warmth to what on paper is merely a brain-frozen dreamer, Sandler refines his ‘tard schtick to a new high (or is that a low?), and Buscemi simply walks away with the picture. As the leading scene-stealer of his generation (how would you like to go one-on-one with him in *Miller’s Crossing* or *Reservoir Dogs*?), Buscemi’s Rex is a perfectly realized, self-contained wonder. With only the sketchiest of a part he conveys menace, dimwittedness and child-like enthusiasm, sometimes all within the same scene. He’s a major talent forever on the rise. Only Amy Locane as the head-butting, crotch-kicking girlfriend of Chazz seems a little out of sync. She’s too pretty to be a convincing conniver.

When critics critique a movie’s soundtrack, it’s no big esoteric mystery: Either it featured music they listen to and like or it didn’t. Therefore, let me testify that *Airheads* possesses a superior musical sense of kick-ocity. Current faves

hastily tacked-on explosion. You’re left wanting more. The gags flow with regularity and characters surprise you with their un-PC honesty, yet ultimately one senses the gang is holding back. Soft-ball sex scenes and the near absence of the F-word keep the film from rising to a higher, truer plateau. But why quibble. Compared to *FM* (’78), another “Let’s take over the radio station,” this is a certifiable masterpiece. Like great fast food, *Airheads* ain’t good for you, it’s great going down and never pretends to be anything it’s not, and thus, it’s highly recommended.



Paul

THE BOTTOM LINE

“While other music-related comedies skirt the main issues and weasel about, *Airheads* names names and goes for the throat. Yes, gang, here’s that rarest of the species, a picture with teeth.”

OVERALL

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