

Last Action Hero

US : 1993 : dir. John McTiernan : Columbia : 136 min
 prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:
[Austin O'Brien](#) [d]; [Ryan Todd](#)
 Arnold Schwarzenegger; Charles Dance; F Murray Abraham; Art Carney; Frank McRae;
 Tom Noonan; Robert Prosky; Anthony Quinn; Mercedes Ruehl; Ian McKellern; Joan Plowright
 Prof Toru Tanaka; Jason Kelly; Noah Emmerich; Billy Lucas; Apollo Dukakis; Michael Chieffo;
 Patrick Flanagan; Donald C Llorens

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω 8 ∅ M ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 1996 review:

"Noisy, smug, self-conscious blockbuster-wannabe about a boy whose "magic ticket" sends him through the screen and right into an action movie alongside his no.1 hero, Jack Slater (Schwarzenegger) - and into peril as together they fight the bad guys. Genuinely bad writing and an overall air of unpleasantness torpedo this film; good action scenes and occasional clever ideas can't save it. (And how exactly did an Ingmar Bergman picture wend its way into the story?) A raft of cameo appearances add to the in-joke tone of the picture. Shot in Panavision. **"

TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995 review:

"The idea of people jumping into films is hardly new, but this treatment is pretty inventive by the standards of the genre, and allows Arnold Schwarzenegger to play another amusing variant on his own image: no small achievement considering his limited range. Wide-eyed Austin O'Brien is the sub-teen *[sic]* film freak given a magic ticket (invented by Houdini!) to a preview of the latest adventure of his favourite film character Jack Slater. No sooner have the first scenes unspooled than the kid finds himself catapulted into the film. Slater is baffled that the boy knows so much about him - not to mention his prior knowledge of the plot, which has villains Charles Dance and Anthony Quinn taking control of the L.A. underworld. Later, the movie neatly reverses everything when Slater comes back to real life in pursuit of his fictional enemies, and is puzzled to find he's

no longer invincible. The star pokes fun at himself - Slater can't remember the name of the actor who plays him and introduces himself as Arnold Braunschweiger - and some "real life" stars contribute cameos, including Schwarzenegger himself, being nagged by his wife for relentlessly plugging his own chain of restaurants. Underrated. ***"

Empire review:

"Like that other expensive folly **"HEAVEN'S GATE"**, **"LAST ACTION HERO"** isn't actually such an awful piece of filmmaking as it is a breathtaking example of just what hubris can achieve when it's given a really big budget to work with. The central idea, that action star Jack Slater steps down off the screen to find a world where the bangs can kill and the bruises really hurt, is no lamer an idea than those behind Arnie's other efforts; it merely lacks the remotest hint of tension or suspense.

Like a soap opera whose writers have grown bored with the format while remaining deeply attached to the cheques it generates, Arnold and his ridiculously overpaid team needlessly elaborate the central idea and saddle themselves with passages of explanation regarding the precise status of the plot that quickly grow tiresome. It's not merely complicated. It's cluttered with irrelevancies. What has clearly never occurred to anyone is that once you bring an action hero out of his fictional world you rip him right out of the very dramatic context that makes him even remotely interesting. Charles Dance as the villain in the movie-within-the-movie is a camp enough idea; once he's stepped down

off the screen it's a preposterous and unthreatening one as well. Like the ludicrous AC/DC clip that acts as a prologue to the video version¹, and the queue of celebs (Tina Turner, Sharon Stone, etc) waiting for their cameo moment, this is a piece of work born of a quite astonishing degree of self-satisfaction, the sort of conceited thinking that suggests that only you are sufficiently equipped to lampoon yourself.

Schwarzenegger could do to employ someone whose job it is to take him aside every day and remind him that he's a bodybuilder who got very lucky indeed and that massive grosses do not an icon make. John Wayne left it to others. The public's reluctance to shell out for this film at the box office suggests that the Great Unwashed know a few things that are not always apparent to the wise guys with the houses on the beach. ** ” - David Hepworth

Videocassette - **Columbia Tristar VHS CVR 29669** - sleeve notes:

“Danny Madigan (Austin O'Brien), a young cinema fan is crazy about his all-time great movie hero, L.A. cop Jack Slater (Arnold Schwarzenegger). Having received a magic golden cinema ticket, Danny is blasted through the big screen and into the action alongside his celluloid hero, who is more than a little puzzled by his presence. Fasten your seatbelt, as the daredevil duo dodge bullets, bombs and bad guys in a whirlwind world where anything is possible! But.. disaster strikes when the baddies grab half the magic ticket and make their escape into the real world, where they find life a doddle for two rogues intent on madness and mayhem². With Jack and Danny in hot pursuit, hold your breath as the action-addicts discover that real life can be even more exciting than the movies.”

Radio Times reviews:

“Maybe not Arnie's finest hour, but at any rate a big budget action movie with buckets of energy. It rests on the same premise as Woody Allen's **"PURPLE ROSE OF CAIRO"** - that folk can step from their cinema seats into the world on screen. Arnie is an old-fashioned superhero joined by an 11-year old, with the

help of a magical movie ticket. Watch it for fast-paced action.”

“The best film, because it's the only undoubted classic, among the many being given some kind of TV premiere this autumn, is Clint Eastwood's magnificent Western **"UNFORGIVEN"**. The worst, if only because it cost so much and was so universally disliked that it lost a reputed \$124 million, is Arnie Schwarzenegger's genuine, egg-on-face flop **"LAST ACTION HERO"**... ”

“Premiere of this super-clever Arnold Schwarzenegger action film. Dismissed by many as a creative and commercial flop, it's actually one of the star's most pleasurable excursions, with an ingenious tale that has Arnie jetting off on a movieworld adventure courtesy of a magic cinema ticket³. Likeable escapism directed by John McTiernan.”

“A magic ticket enables a young boy to be transported on to the cinema screen, where he becomes the unlikely partner of an action hero.”

“A silver screen hero is joined by his number one fan. ** ”

TV Times reviews:

“Arnold Schwarzenegger has fun with his action man image in this light-hearted adventure. He plays a fictional superhero who pursues evil villain Charles Dance into the real world, all the while accompanied by his biggest fan (young Austin O'Brien). This action-movie-cum-parody doesn't really succeed on either level, but Dance is a delight and a good-natured Arnie excels in a typical role.”

“Hollywood superstar Arnold Schwarzenegger is in muscle-ripping form in tonight's special effects packed adventure. He stars as Jack Slater, the movie hero of Danny (Austin O'Brien), an 11-year old New Yorker. When a friendly old projectionist gives Danny a magic cinema ticket, the youngster's transported into Jack's movie world and helps him fight the baddies. If Arnie had a magic ticket he'd choose to visit a John Wayne film. "To end up riding with John Wayne, chasing the bad guys – it's been a fantasy of mine since I was a kid," he says.”

¹ Not on my copy it doesn't

² So much so that one of them is killed almost instantly

³ No no.. you've got it all mixed up..

“Action fantasy starring Arnold Schwarzenegger. A young movie fan is given a magic ticket to a preview of the latest adventure of his favourite film character, and finds himself transported into the screen action. But when a screen mobster enters the real world, things become dangerous.”

"Action fantasy starring Arnold Schwarzenegger and Austin O'Brien. A young cinema fan finds himself transported into the screen action of the latest adventure movie.”

“Big Arnold Schwarzenegger loves his family on set watching him work in his action films - but it can have its drawbacks. "When I did the scene where I drive a car through a building, ending up in a living room, my daughter Catherine (then six) was above the soundstage, jumping up and down. When we played the soundtrack back, all we could hear was her shouting 'Daddy! Daddy!' We had to add the crash sounds from elsewhere." ”

What's On TV (?) review:

“One of the most expensive films ever with a reported \$100 million plus budget, this cartoon-come-to-life was much underrated by the critics. Fantasy meets reality when silver screen action hero Jack Slater (Arnold Schwarzenegger) is joined in his adventures by his biggest fan (pint-sized Austin O'Brien) courtesy of a magic cinema ticket invented by Houdini. The story unfolds in a breathless blur of pyrotechnics and shoot-outs, and boasts a list of big-name cameos that looks like half of Hollywood was in on the joke. Great fun! ***”

Sunday Times review:

“Self-parody can be a very difficult trick to pull off, which is one of the reasons why Schwarzenegger's expensive fantasy adventure, co-produced and directed by McTiernan, flopped. Schwarzenegger plays a macho screen idol. When an 11-year old boy (Austin O'Brien) acquires Houdini's magic ticket from an old cinema projectionist (Robert Prosky) it allows him to join the superstar on screen and take part in his adventures. He enters the alternative world of the movies where all telephone numbers begin 555 and violence never hurts. The ticket falls into the hands of a villain (Dance) who uses it as a passport to the real world of New York, and this causes Schwarzenegger to leave the screen

and come after him. A choice moment is a trailer for an action-packed version of Hamlet in which the gloomy Dane has been turned into a heavily armed avenger who eventually blows up the castle of Elsinore.”

“Arnold Schwarzenegger's expensive flop (jokey references to Olivier's "**HAMLET**" and Bergman's "**SEVENTH SEAL**" puzzled audiences) blurs illusion and reality. Muddled, but also spectacular and occasionally witty.”

“A boy is given a magical ticket to help his screen idol.”

“A magic cinema ticket enables a boy to help his hero.”

“Fantasy adventure about a young boy who is transported on to the cinema screen. * ”

Daily Mirror note:

“Magic ticket takes little Austin O'Brien into the action of the new Schwarzenegger movie. Strong stunts, jaded jokes in a slapdash slambang. With Charles Dance, F Murray Abraham and Anthony Quinn. ** ”

“Young boy steps into an Arnold Schwarzenegger movie. Strong stunts, jaded jokes in a clod-hopping adventure. ** ”

TV Times pseudo-interview:

"His sexist jokes might make you want to hit him... but you'd probably think twice about doing it. For here's a man built like a mountain, from top to toe a super-hero. But even though Arnold Schwarzenegger's muscles of steel are still in rippling good form, it has to be said that even he can't avoid the passing of time and, at 48, he must be asking himself how long his world-beating action-man status will go on for. But his dry sense of humour is as strong as ever. Arnie's a terrible tease, about as subtle as a sledgehammer, and given to politically incorrect and sexist wisecracks (butts, boobs, and men being the boss). But somehow you wind up liking him, and can't help but admire his spirit.

When "**LAST ACTION HERO** ", described as a spoof and satire about action heroes, opened in 1993, the critics pummelled it. Undaunted, Arnold still called it "the best movie I have ever done. He's near impervious to brickbats. "I was so high on the pedestal,

where else could I go? he muses. "The critics have always beat up on me. You've got to take the good and the bad and not complain about it. He found the script of "LAST ACTION HERO absolutely irresistible. "I love the theme of What would it be like if a kid gets into the movie and meets his action hero? he enthuses.

When a boy himself, Arnold was drawn to films. "I saw John Wayne riding on his huge horse and shooting away and chasing the bad guys. He was my big idol . Now Arnie is an idol to many but he's not above having the same everyday worries as lesser mortals. "I just play this action hero but I'm not exactly like that, okay? he says patiently. Though financially he has fewer worries than most. The blockbuster success of films such as "TERMINATOR "TOTAL RECALL and the newly released "ERASER , plus his shrewd business sense have seen to that.

Arnold, his wife Maria Shriver (John F Kennedy's niece) and their children Katherine, Christina and Patrick, live in a palatially grand family compound in hyper-exclusive Pacific Palisades, near Beverly Hills, within sniffing distance of the ocean. The star has also splashed out on a few expensive toys, including a Gulfstream G-III jet. Last spring, he treated himself to a few well-chosen

historic goodies from the Jackie Onassis auction, parting with \$772,500 for a set of JFK's golf clubs alone. His other indulgence is his beloved cigars, though he's banished outdoors to smoke. Which illustrates, Arnold chuckles, that he's obviously not the one in the family wearing the trousers! " - Sue Russell

[And did Sue Russell interview Schwarzenegger in person? Did she hell! She believes, it would seem, that sexism is OK from a man so long as he's "built like a mountain" and smokes his cigars outside the house. Otherwise, she says, she wouldn't think twice about hitting him. And that's politically correct is it, Sue?]

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

No further information currently available

See also "**BADKONAK-E SEFID**" and "**BASHU**" - both recent Iranian films, and subject index under **ARAB WORLD / MIDDLE EAST**.