Legally Blonde 2: Red White & Blonde

MGM Home Entertainment



MOVIE - 2 stars
EXTRAS - 3.5 stars

The inevitability of sequels is a very troubling thing. These days any successful movie is followed up with another, no matter what kind of sacrifice that might mean in the quality. And that is particularly true of *Legally Blonde 2: Red White & Blue*.

There's no denying that *Legally Blonde* was an enjoyable piece of fluff, almost single-handedly made watchable by the not insubstantial charms of Reece Witherspoon. She was perfectly cast as the preppy Elle Woods, the very blonde law student who wasn't nearly as dumb as she initially appeared, and the story of her struggle against the odds to become a lawyer was cute and funny.

The sequel finds Elle Woods trying to locate her pet dog's mother so she can invite her to her forthcoming wedding. When she discovers that the dog in question is being used in a cosmetics research facility, she tries to free her by moving to Washington DC and working for a congresswoman and getting animal testing banned. You can guess how it all ends.

The thinking behind the sequel was to simply offer more of the same. A lot more of the same. So much more, in fact, that any kind of subtlety that the first film offered has gone completely. In *Legally Blonde 2*, the characters have been reduced to one-dimensional caricatures who say stupid things because the writers thought it was hilarious. It isn't. Things get a little bit better when things first move to Washington, but the movie does drag its heels along its predictable path before reaching the feel good ending.

As fluff movies go, this isn't a particularly good one because it just recycles cliches and jokes that aren't all that funny. Yet there is a vaguely inspirational element about how if you set your mind to something, you can achieve anything. Or something like that.

While the extras on some DVDs are simply there to fill up the rest of the disc or to give the impression of value for money, some of the extras here reveal the story of the film that could have been.

The deleted scenes are the most telling because there are moments that didn't make the final cut that delve further into the American political system, indicating that there might have been some attempts to turn *Legally Blonde 2* into a satirical look at US politics.

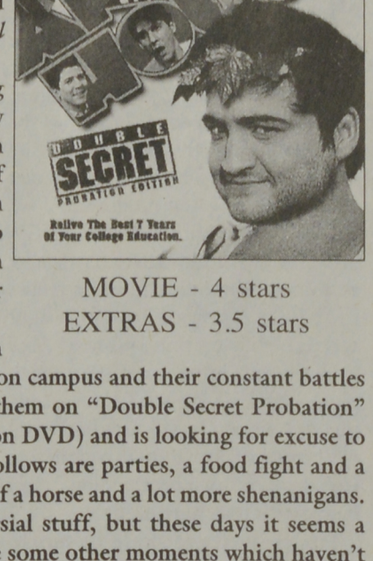
Most of the other extras aren't anything worth getting too excited about - the gag reel is probably funnier to those involved than the audience, and the featurette would only be really interesting if you really, really enjoyed the film. The commentary is done by the three female actors who play Witherspoon's friends and involves more giggling and inside jokes than useful information (unless you want to know that the dog in the movie had bad breath).

Ultimately, *Legally Blonde 2: Red White & Blonde* is a test of just how likeable Reece Witherspoon is, and she comes out of it smelling of roses (which I assume are pink). It is as inoffensive and forgettable as movies are, but it should put an end to this particular series before reaching a third installment.

Extras: Deleted Scenes, Gag Reel, LeAnn Rimes Music Video, Audio Commentary by the Cast, Interactive Quiz, "Blonde Ambition" Featurette, Behind-The-Scenes Photo Gallery, Trailers.

National Lampoon's Animal House Double Secret Probation Edition

MGM Home Entertainment



MOVIE - 4 stars
EXTRAS - 3.5 stars

When it comes to historically important movies, the list normally features the likes of *Citizen Kane*, *The Godfather* and *Gone With The Wind*, but comedies are often overlooked or undervalued. Yet there are some whose influence is still being felt decades after their initial release, and that is especially true of *National Lampoon's Animal House*.

It was a true innovator, pushing mainstream comedy further than any comedy before. It was a crude film where the "heroes" were a bunch of college drop-outs who took pride in their appalling behaviour. Yet, like so many comedies since, it feels like a triumph of good over evil whenever they reek havoc on campus.

Animal House is the tale of Delta House, the worst of the fraternities on campus and their constant battles against the evil Dean who has put them on "Double Secret Probation" (hence the name of this special edition DVD) and is looking for excuse to kick them all out of college. What follows are parties, a food fight and a road trip, not to mention the death of a horse and a lot more shenanigans.

Back in 1978, this was controversial stuff, but these days it seems a little on the tame side. Plus there are some other moments which haven't dated well concerning race and underage sex. But there are some wonderful performances from a cast who went on to bigger and better things such as Kevin Bacon, Stephen Furst, Karen Allen and Donald Sutherland. John Belushi is simply fantastic as Bluto, the grossest of the Delta brothers and steals every single scene he is in.

The humour is not of the subtle variety, but fans of the *American Pie* movies and all those other recent teen comedies will definitely enjoy *Animal House*, especially if they haven't seen it before.

The extras are a mixed bag. *Where Are They Now?* is a 20 minute "mockumentary" which catches up with some of the characters from the movie after all these years. It might have been interesting, or even amusing, if we had no idea what they'd been up to, but it simply reiterates what the closing credits of the original movie stated.

The Yearbook is a lot more interesting. It is a 45 minute documentary about the making of *Animal House*, featuring interviews with the writers, actors and director, plus it also has some neat behind-the-scenes home movies with the cast. It did, however, appear on the earlier version of the DVD.

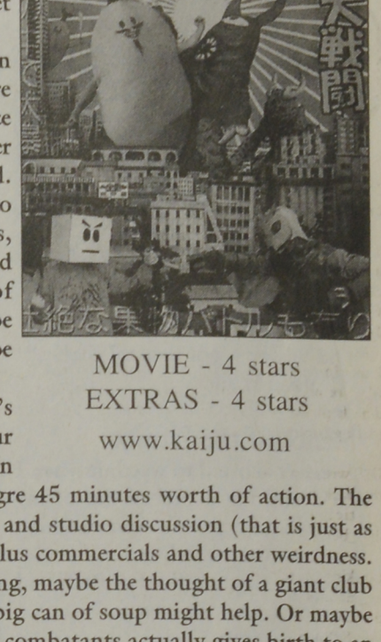
The Animated Anecdotes are a *Pop Up Video* type thing, with subtitles that appear during the movie featuring trivia about the movie, while MxPx cover 'Shout' in a way that really isn't particularly different from the version from the infamous toga party.

National Lampoon's Animal House has probably dated as well as any other comedy from the late 70s, but it is still worth watching simply to see where the genre started so many years ago. Plus it still is really very funny for a movie of this age.

Extras: Where Are They Now? A Delta Alumni Update, The Yearbook: An Animal House Reunion, MxPx Music Video, Universal Animated Anecdotes.

Kaiju Big Battel: Terebi Sento

Redline Entertainment



MOVIE - 4 stars
EXTRAS - 4 stars
www.kaiju.com

I think that it is very safe to say that there really is nothing else quite like *Kaiju Big Battel*.

Imagine, if you can, a surreal mix of Japanese monster movies, wrestling and a never-ending struggle between good and evil, and you might begin to get an inkling of what *KBB* is all about.

It all started back in Boston back in the mid 90s when the first Battels were held as a form of low key performance art that somehow became much bigger than anyone might have expected. These days, the Battels have turned into major events featuring steel cages, cardboard buildings that can be used as weapons and a menagerie of monsters that have to be seen to be believed, led by the nefarious Dr. Cube and the super hero Silver Potato.

Terebi Sento is the organization's first DVD release, and it features four "fightos" from 2001's 'Mayhem In The Atrium V', with about a meagre 45 minutes worth of action. The fights are linked with commentary and studio discussion (that is just as silly as the onscreen happenings), plus commercials and other weirdness.

If this still doesn't sound appealing, maybe the thought of a giant club sandwich fighting with an equally big can of soup might help. Or maybe a three-way dance where one of the combatants actually gives birth to an insect larva during the fight might be more intriguing. Then there's the final fight which sees the return of Silver Potato, along with a video montage tribute to him.

It really is hard to put into words exactly how hilarious and just plain weird *Kaiju Big Battel* is. While the wrestling aspect of it is impressive enough (especially considering the bulky costumes being worn), it is the immersive world that has been created that really makes *KBB* so special.

The presentation is colourful to the extreme, with menus that are jam-packed with unnecessary stuff and screenshots from the event. The live footage has been enhanced with sound and video effects to make every blow and move seem even more destructive. And the entire DVD has been produced with a Japanese feel to it, right down to the broken English and mysterious symbols that accompany every replay.

The extras help to flesh out the *Kaiju* world, with explanations of how the initial battels started and character biographies to explain both their strengths and weaknesses. The Live Event Trailers are really interesting because it shows how much additional footage is available, so hopefully the next DVD will include a lot more fights and other silliness. One non-DVD extra is a goodie bag of magnets, pins, stickers and propaganda, hidden away inside the lovely yellow case.

Kaiju Big Battel is poised on the brink of world domination, with a book in the works for early next year. *Terebi Sento* is the perfect introduction to their own brand of weirdness, but is let down by the shortness of the DVD, something which I'm sure will be taken care of by the inevitable follow-up.

Extras: Kaiju Commercials, Character Bios, Live Event Trailers, Piebald Music Video, What Is Kaiju? Feature, Goodie Bag.

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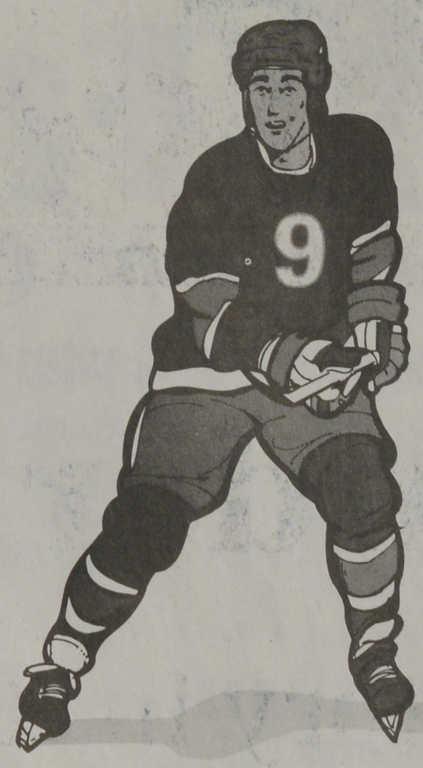
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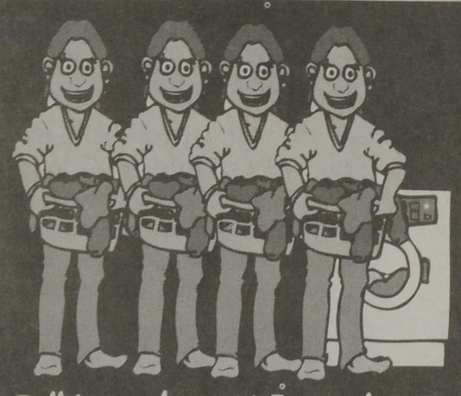
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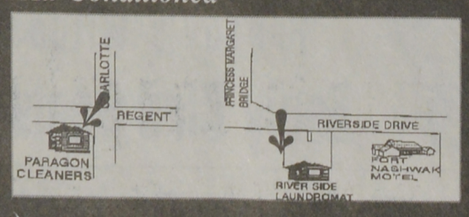
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