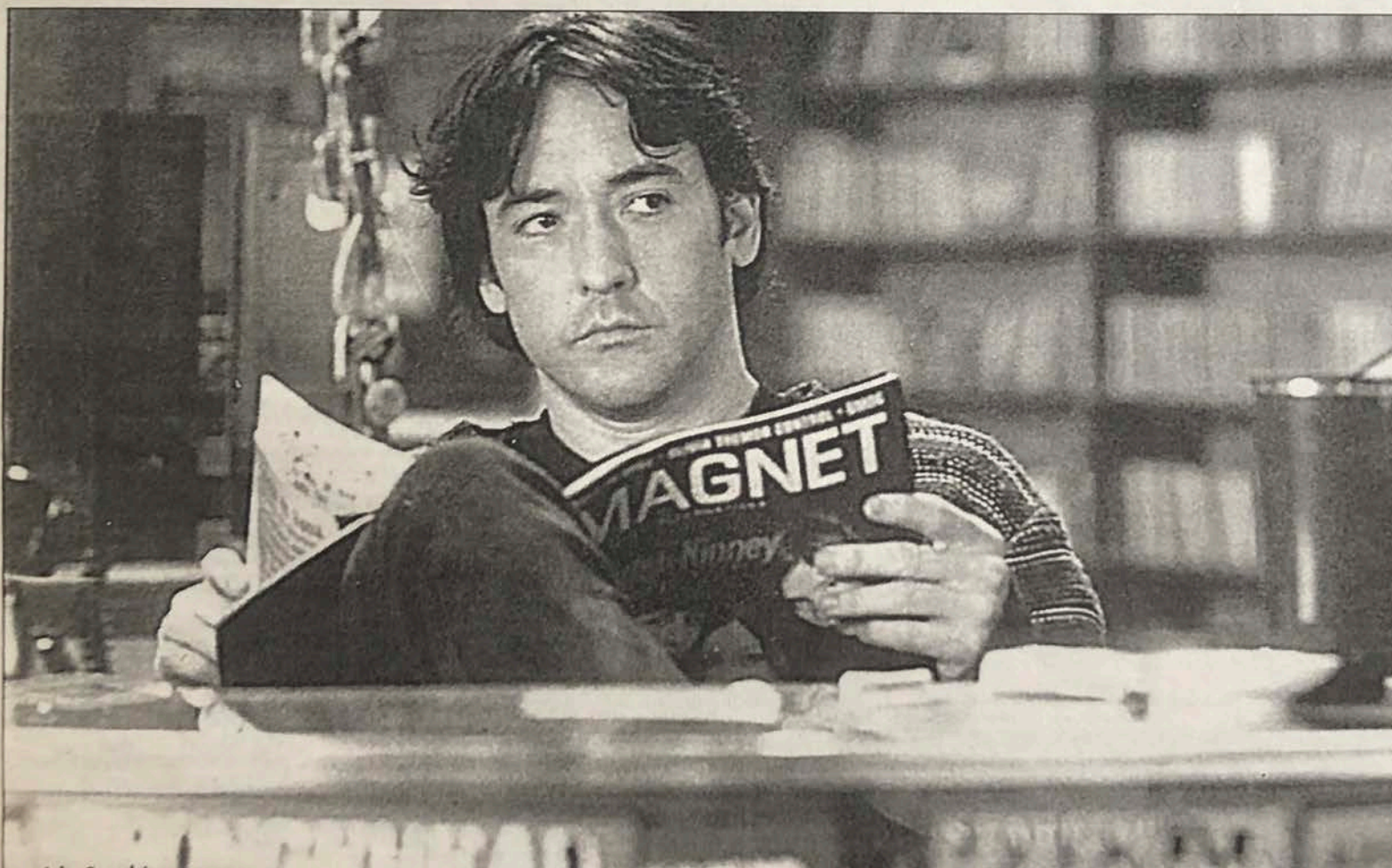


Lights, camera, Chicago!



CHICAGO CINEMA

Since 1980, more than 550 feature films have been shot in Chicago. Some of our faves:

RISKY BUSINESS (1983)

Tom Cruise made a name for himself in this movie, which finally proved that starting a prostitution ring can get you into college (duh).

ABOUT LAST NIGHT (1986)

Based on the play "Sexual Perversity in Chicago," this film stars a pre-Ashton Demi Moore and Rob Lowe as a couple trying to figure out how to stay in a relationship (while appropriately wearing oversized '80s sweater cardigans).

FERRIS BUELLER'S DAY OFF (1986)

Bueller? Anyone? Matthew Broderick and friends take a ditch day and roam the city, because driving around in a convertible and being in a parade completely beats homework.

ADVENTURES IN BABYSITTING (1987)

Go ahead. Try and find someone who doesn't refer to the triangular building downtown as the Adventures in Babysitting building. Seriously. Try it.

THE UNTOUCHABLES (1987)

Chicago was a beautiful backdrop for this winning interpretation of gangster life in the city, featuring Robert DeNiro as a really, really creepy Al Capone.

Is Chicago morphing from the City of Big Shoulders to the City of Big Screens?

BY ERIN BRERETON

CENTERSTAGECHICAGO.COM

The film: Top-notch Hollywood production. The title: "Derailed." The stars: Jennifer Aniston, "King Arthur" star Clive Owen and the Joliet Correctional

Center.

Seriously. This month, the cast and crew of "Derailed" will begin filming just outside of Hollywood—in Joliet.

Aniston reportedly won't be in any of the scenes filmed at the Chicagoland location, but Owen will be logging in some time at the prison, which closed in 2002. It may seem like an unlikely place to film a movie, but this won't be the first time the Joliet Correctional Center has appeared on the silver screen. The jailhouse was also shown in the 1973 film "The Sting" and made an appearance in the Chi-town classic "The Blues Brothers."

The 144-year-old prison may be the latest local spot to serve as a movie set, but Chicago is certainly no stranger to film crews. This year alone, five major motion pictures have been shot here; "Crain's" recently reported that the film industry spent \$3.75 million in Chicago in the first half of 2004.

"Compared to the past two to

three years, we are seeing much more in Hollywood feature activity," says Richard Moskal, director of the Chicago Film Office. Spurred partially by a state tax incentive, Hollywood is becoming more open to shooting in the Windy City. In the past few months alone, the feature films "Roll Bounce" and "Batman Begins" wrapped. Nicholas Cage finished shooting "The Weather Man" here this summer; numerous celebs starring in "Oceans 12" were spotted around town, while the cast was filming in Chicago.

So why is Hollywood suddenly migrating to the Midwest? It's all about film location, film location, film location.

"Hollywood is constantly seeking out new and more affordable locales," Moskal says. "With governments around the world all vying for the film business and offering lucrative incentives to capture those dollars, Chicago's competition has grown significantly in the past few years. But Chicago still offers a great product: the distinctive, big city look of a metropolis; an expert crew base; and an internationally recognized talent pool which draws heavily from Chicago's theater community."

Ruth Ratny, a former filmmaker and founder of Screen magazine and Reelchicago.com

agrees.

"Chicago offers a huge variety of versatile locations. It can substitute for just about anywhere else," Ratny says. "You can find 19th century houses in Chicago, a bustling downtown, a gorgeous skyline, neighborhoods and downstate, too, offers infinite possibilities."

It's also pretty convenient. The Chicago Film Office, a division of the Mayor's Office of Special Events, is a one-stop shop for filmmakers, offering permits, serving as a liaison with various city services and departments, doing community outreach, arranging for city-owned properties such as airports and city hall as filming locations.

Between television and film requests, the Chicago Film Office receives about 40 to 50 filming requests a year. In addition to big-screen blockbusters, it also accommodates smaller productions that want to film in the city.

"We cut the red tape and make it as easy possible while at the same time, minimizing impacts to the community and its residents," Moskal says. He travels to Los Angeles two to three times a year to meet with studios and producers and actively maintains relationships with film executives, producers and directors who have shot here in the past

because, he says, "repeat business is our best business."

"Our most effective efforts are in making it all work for them while they're here," Moskal says. "Warner Bros. is producing 'Batman Begins,' and their satisfaction with Chicago was prompted them to consider two more features for Chicago later this year, first part of next."

Not that Chicago always wins. Even with stellar locales and a willing-and-eager film office, Hollywood sometimes opts to film Chicago-based movies elsewhere.

"Probably the most obvious losses were 'My Big Fat Greek Wedding' and 'Chicago,'" Moskal says. "Both [were] shot in Toronto to take advantage of incentives. Both would have been better pictures if they took advantage of the city in which they were set."

It's too early to tell if the recent filming surge will bring the city back to the bustle it experienced in the late 1980s and 1990s, when John Hughes (of "Ferris Bueller's Day Off") forever preserved the teen experience on celluloid and several TV series took up home in the city, but one thing is certain: Whether Hollywood recognizes it, Chicago is a damn fine filming location. After all, even our prisons are silver screen material.

POLTERGEIST III (1988)

Shot in the John Hancock building, this film confirms that the building was a lot less cuddly before the Cheesecake Factory moved in.

THE HUDSUCKER PROXY (1994)

Parts of this Cohen brothers film were done in the Merchandise Mart, presumably because of its vintage, art deco look.

THE ROAD TO PERDITION (2002)

Tom Hanks and co. recreated a vintage Chicago—and in the process, made a really, really good movie.

HIGH FIDELITY (2002)

John Cusack gets all indie on us and brings this Nick Hornby book to a Chicago setting.

COMING SOON NEAR YOU

Keep an eye out for the following Chicago-set movies to hit theaters in the coming months.

THE WEATHER MAN

Starring: Nicholas Cage
The plot involves a Chicago weatherman contemplating a move to New York.

BATMAN BEGINS

Starring: Christian Bale
Earlier referred to as "Batman: Intimidation Game," it's rumored that parts of the script were rewritten to include Lower Wacker after the studio decided to film in Chicago.