

(HBO) 15	Sonic: Season of the Celebration (PG) (2002, Adventure) Voices of Matt Damon, James Cromwell, Darius	Scooby-Doo! Where's the Clue? (PG) (2002, Adventure) Friends of Scooby and the gang reunite to sniff out	Shrek 2 (PG) (2002, Animation) Shrek and the gang reunite to sniff out	Shrek 2 (PG) (2002, Animation) Shrek and the gang reunite to sniff out	Shrek 2 (PG) (2002, Animation) Shrek and the gang reunite to sniff out
(MAX) 16	(6:45) A Knight's Tale (PG) (2001, Adventure) Heath Ledger, Mark Addy, Rufus Sewell. A peasant poses as a knight for a shot at jousting	Liberty Stands Still (PG) (2002, Suspense) Linda Fiorentino, Wesley Snipes, Oliver Platt. A vengeful	Close Enough to Touch (PG) (2000, Adult) Monique Parent, Brandy	Close Enough to Touch (PG) (2000, Adult) Monique Parent, Brandy	Close Enough to Touch (PG) (2000, Adult) Monique Parent, Brandy
(SHOW) 17	(6:00) Roseanne (PG) (1987, Comedy) Steve Martin, Daryl Hannah, Rick Rossovich. TV. A modern Cynara helps a shy buddy woo a	Sideways of New York (PG) (2001, Comedy-Drama) Edward Burns, Rosario Dawson, Dennis Farina. TV. Documentary subjects give their	Queer as Folk (TV) (1999) Woody's closet, Ted lends bar at one of	Queer as Folk (TV) (1999) Woody's closet, Ted lends bar at one of	Queer as Folk (TV) (1999) Woody's closet, Ted lends bar at one of

Celebration City theme park opens in Branson

Associated Press

BRANSON, Mo. — A \$40 million venture aimed at drawing younger visitors by turning life-changing events from the 20th century into entertainment has opened in this southwest Missouri resort town.

Celebration City has elements of theme-park predecessors — including a wooden roller coast-

er, restaurants and shopping — but it will take visitors back in time to the early 1900s, before fast-forwarding to the 1950s. And, it will do it at night.

The 3 p.m. daily opening is part of a marketing strategy the park's owners and others hope will lower the average age of the typical Branson visitor — now 55 years old — by increasing

evening activities in the town that has largely relied on senior travelers.

"The beauty of this is that we have a product that won't exclude the seniors, but we are marketing to young families," said Steve Honeycutt, the park's general manager.

Branson is smart to diversify, while not to trying reinvent

itself, said Hank Phillips, president of National Tour Association, which represents 4,000 package tour operators across North America.

"I think they're wise to get behind Celebration City because it could serve as a catalyst for developing other attractions that will reach out to younger age groups," he said.

While concerns of terrorism and the economy remain on the minds of many, Phillips predicted the tourism industry will rebound in the coming year. "People have been pent up, and they want to get out and start traveling," he said.

Tim O'Brien, editor of Amusement Business magazine, also sees wisdom in the timing of what is expected to be the largest new park development to open in North America this year.

"To build a new amusement park is quite unusual any more," he said. "But I think what they're doing in Branson is very solid. The fear of flying, the fear of terrorism really doesn't come into mind when you think of drive-in regional destinations."

"I would bet big bucks on Branson this year."

Herschend Family Entertainment, owner of Celebration City, is no stranger to the Branson entertainment industry. Its properties include White Water waterpark, Showboat Branson Belle, The Grand Village Shops

and Dixie Stampede Dinner Theatre.

But the company's granddaddy is Silver Dollar City, a park themed around 1880s Ozarks culture that features nearly 100 craftsmen demonstrating everything from glass blowing to making candy and candles. The park, open until 7 p.m. in peak season, draws 2.1 million visitors a year, officials said.

Herschend also owns or operates 16 other properties in seven states, including Dollywood in Pigeon Forge, Tenn., with partner Dolly Parton, and Stone Mountain Park in Atlanta.

Celebration City continues Silver Dollar City's tradition of bringing the past to life, Honeycutt said.

Visitors enter through a Victorian-style main street. It celebrates the early 1900s, with pastel painted architecture, ornate lamp posts and a vintage carousel. Gumballs and licorice sticks can be purchased at Dr. Smiley's Candy.

The next stop is Route 66, with neon signs, vintage automobiles and a diner that features malts and burgers.

Not far away is Ozark WildCat, a \$4 million wooden roller coaster that reaches speeds of 45 mph and drops eight stories. It has a one-of-a-kind 310-degree spiraling double-down first drop.

"The fun is in the combination of twists and turns and bunny

hops that give you a little air time out of your seat," said Jeff Mast of Independence, regional representative for the 8,000-member American Coaster Enthusiasts.

Visitors also will find themselves on Electric Boardwalk. It features amusement rides and old-time carnival booths with games. Players will spend about \$1 to \$2 for each chance to win a stuffed animal or other prize by pitching rings and tossing basketballs.

The park will close with a nightly outdoor, multimedia laser show, called "Celebrate!" It uses a five-story, manmade granite mountainside, water screen, projections and fireworks set to music to mark the highlights of the 20th Century, such as space travel and the Beatles.

The park covers 45 of the 112 acres the company owns just off Missouri 76, making it a good candidate for expansion, Honeycutt said.

The park will operate 3 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Wednesday through Sunday until May 23. Then it will stay open until 11 p.m. daily. A grand opening is planned for May 30.

"We wanted time to get the kinks worked out," Honeycutt said.

No parents allowed in 'Better Luck'

Justin Lin's *Better Luck Tomorrow* wants to be *Boyz n the Hood* for Oriental American kids. But the movie turns out to be more like the suburban California *Forrest Gump*, oddly enough. Like *Gump*, *Better Luck Tomorrow* follows a goofy-looking compulsive with mental powers who lives the trends of a recent decade, right?

Well, *Forrest* wasn't nearly as disaffected as is Ben, the protagonist of *BLT*. Ben and his friends, five or six other American teens of Asiatic descent, seem to go days without seeing adults. I only remember two adult characters in the film — Ben's biology teacher and his basketball coach. Considering what we've learned recently about Mr. Eustacy continuing to live as if he was an undergraduate, perhaps basketball coaches don't function like real adults. And the biology teacher is played by Jerry Mathers, *The Beaver*.

So there isn't a lot of adult scrutiny of Ben's gang. They run a ring selling stolen electronic equipment and school cheat sheets and finally drugs though they already have plenty of money. They steal for fun, but don't seem to enjoy themselves. Failure to be happy becomes a topic of conversation in one of



G.W. CLIFT
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friendship (in Las Vegas; and d) memorizes the definition of an unfamiliar word a day.

This is the sort of thing editors and moviemakers think of as characterization. Viewers should be getting to know Ben by hearing him talk about life with his rival for the affections of racially Asiatic Stephanie and by seeing him maintain a stock "academic over-achiever" routine. But we don't get to know him. When the closest thing to a climax occurs in the film, we don't understand why he has snapped when he has.

And he seems to snap right back.

The movie begins with Ben and his long-time pal Virgil sunbathing in the backyard of a house owned by the parents of their former business associate

al. At the end of the movie we know Ben and Virgil are unlikely to be sunbathing on that lawn, and why. They don't get along all that well with Jesus. And they already know about the body.

So why are they there? It suits the moviemakers to have a corpse discovered in this way right at the top of the film. The corpse takes the place of a central complication. Whose body was it? How did it come to be there? The movie doesn't answer the second question.

So it doesn't really end. Ben and his friends meet here and there, they hire a prostitute in Las Vegas, they buy each other Glocks as birthday presents, they attend school club meetings. They drive to parties. Ben studies fairly ordinary words. The moviemakers should have looked up the definition of "fruitless." Ben wishes Stephanie could be in love with him.

But, note this: when the film wants to ask why her last name is Vandergraf, it doesn't show us her parents. We learn they are both Caucasians by seeing a photo of them. Kid's Club. No Parents Allowed.



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Mar 4, 2026