

Summer's hits and misses: What made a splash on the entertainment scene and what fizzled.

As a wacky summer of blockbuster films, celebrity weddings and Katy Perry winds down, we take a look at what made a splash on the entertainment scene, and what fizzled.

By Brian Dukes and Amneris Solano, Staff writers

The summer, naturally, was filled with superheroes, sequels and a little film about a boy wizard. But the big names didn't necessarily score at the box office, and films like "The Help" and "Bridesmaids" resonated better with audiences.

Still, movie theater owners can't complain.

"I haven't seen the total numbers yet - and we're still waiting to see how 'Conan' does here at the end - but this summer feels like it was bigger than last," said Allen McWhorter, general manager for Market Fair 15 movie theater.

"I think it's mainly due to the sequels," McWhorter said. "The biggest surprise hit of the summer was definitely 'Bridesmaids.' It came out of nowhere."

Hit: Sequels, in general, were a smash hit at the box office this summer, including "Transformers: Dark of the Moon," "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2," "The Hangover Part 2," "Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides," "Fast Five," "Cars 2" and "Rise of the Planet of the Apes," which was really a prequel.

Miss: Ryan Reynolds. Oh, Ryan, your career was going so well - well enough to warrant you the lead role in hopeful franchise starter "Green Lantern." But then "Green Lantern" came out, and was putrid, as was your buddy comedy, "The Change-Up," with Jason Bateman. At least you still have those washboard abs.

Hit: "Bridesmaids" was far and away the best comedy of the summer. It proved that women-centered comedies can be hilarious and that men will watch them. Kristen Wiig is a star on the rise.

Miss: Just because you have big-name stars doesn't mean your film will have big-time success. We're looking at you "Larry Crowne," which flopped despite starring Tom Hanks and Julia Roberts. Also guilty: "Cowboys & Aliens," which starred Harrison Ford and Daniel Craig. And the same goes for "Bad Teacher." Sorry, Cameron Diaz. There once was something about Mary, but no longer.

Women ruled the airwaves this summer, thanks to Katy Perry, Adele, Lady Gaga, Britney Spears and Nicki Minaj. They were joined by LMFAO's "Party Rock Anthem," which topped download charts at the end of summer. "This was the party song of the summer," said Jeff Davis, program director and on-air personality for WQSM 99.8.

Hit: Who said Perry is a one-hit wonder? This summer, Perry became the first woman to land five - five! - No. 1 songs from one album on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. Let's count them, shall we? There's "Last Friday Night (T.G.I.F.)," "E.T.," "Teenage Dream," "California Gurls" and "Firework." The only other artist to ever duplicate this feat was Michael Jackson, the King of Pop himself. But MJ only spent a total of seven weeks at the top with his "Bad" songs; Perry has been at the top perch now for a cumulative 18 weeks with songs from her "Teenage Dream" album.

Miss: Lady Gaga is no stranger to chart-topping hits, but "Judas" just didn't click with music fans. "It bombed for Lady Gaga; I don't know what they were thinking - they released it the week before Easter," said Davis. "It got some traction, but then it was just gone. Gaga redeemed herself with 'The Edge of Glory' though."

Hit: English singer-songwriter Adele has enjoyed a meteoric rise to stardom thanks to her first two albums, "19" and "21." Her single, "Rolling in the Deep," an incredibly powerful blues-meets-gospel track that's infused with a foot-stompin' piano rhythm, sat at the top of the charts for months, long after the album came out. It's just an epic track, and it sets her up for Grammy greatness.

Miss: Oh, Beyoncé. You should be ruling the charts alongside Adele and Perry. But the "Best Thing I Never Had" from your new album wasn't the best thing at all. "It hit the Top 40, but didn't do what it could have," said Davis. "It was here and gone; definitely not what Beyoncé is used to."

Hit: Despite temperatures being beyond hot, construction delays and a little misspelling on one of the displays, the opening of the North Carolina Veterans Park on July 4 was a resounding success. About 3,000 attended the opening, and the top-notch park, filled with moving symbolism, is sure to attract thousands more in years to come.

Miss: The annual Foxy 99 Summer Jam, produced by radio station Foxy 99, has long been one of summer's must-do concerts in Fayetteville, attracting high-profile acts and thousands of music fans. But concert organizers were forced to postpone the hip-hop and R&B concert due to a lack of high-profile acts to celebrate the concert's 25th anniversary. We hope the Foxy Jam can still happen this year. Fall Jam, anyone?

Hit: From start to finish, the arrival of the "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" crew in Fayetteville - and their transformation of a home on Langdon Street - was a hit. The Jubilee House construction drew hundreds of community volunteers and businesses, who built the impressive house for female veterans in a week. Several stars from the show were in town, including host Ty Pennington, and even First lady Michelle Obama came here to help "Move that bus!"

Miss: It's amazing the "Extreme Makeover" house did finish and there weren't any heat related injuries. Indeed, the bright and blistering center of our solar system wreaked havoc on outdoor events this summer - especially at Festival Park. Whether it was the popular Blues-N-Brews festival or the North Carolina Symphony's concert, or even Fayetteville After Five, the summer sun kept many people home. Record temperatures aside, many of these heat-plagued events were still a lot of fun.

Toss-up: The verdict is still out on the swanky Club Barcelona, which opened on Skibo Road in June. Since the grand opening, which drew long lines of well-dressed clubbers, the hefty cover and membership fees have lowered. But crowds still are flocking to the dance floor, and celeb appearances by Ronnie Ortiz-Magro from "Jersey Shore" should keep the buzz going.

Playboy founder Hugh Hefner was left at the altar, and Jennifer Lopez found herself alone on the block. Celebrity shenanigans, if nothing else, proved to be a welcome distraction from the doom and gloom of budget talks and the economy.

Hit: The loveable Emma Stone has been the "It" girl of Hollywood this summer with three big films "Friends with Benefits," "The Help" and "Crazy, Stupid, Love" streaming into theaters in a span of three weeks.

Miss: On the other hand, there's such a thing as too much exposure. Let's take Kim Kardashian. The world has never had much use for the reality star. Hearing about her wedding plans to Kris Humphries hasn't made her any more interesting either. Maybe after the honeymoon, she'll disappear into holy matrimony.

Hit: America's royal crush on Kate Middleton, the Duchess of Cambridge, continued to flourish this summer as she and Prince William visited Canada and the United States. They hobnobbed with celebrities, and Middleton set fashion trends each time she stepped into the sun.

Miss: What will become of Kate Gosselin now that her TLC reality show, "Kate Plus 8," has been canceled? Do we care? Before she was a minor celebrity, Gosselin had a career as a registered nurse, so perhaps it's time for her to get back into her scrubs.



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