

August 3, 2008 NYDN

The not-so wild ones

Hollywood loves a biker gang — nothing gives small-town America a shiver down its spine like a bunch of Hells Angels tooling into town on their big choppers promising mayhem and destruction. It began with Marlon Brando in 1954's "The Wild One" — though we would later find out that the "dangerous" pretty boy Brando played could be placated with a plate of doughnuts.

Biker heroes found their ultimate expression in "Easy Rider" (1969), Dennis Hopper's revolutionary ode to the counterculture. The new flick "Hell Ride," opening Friday, is a modern biker movie with Hopper in the cast for street cred. But too often Hollywood thinks a noisy engine and a leather jacket are all you need to be tough. Here are some examples that ended up with flat tires.

INDIANA JONES AND THE KINGDOM OF THE CRYSTAL SKULL (2008)

The biker: Shia LaBeouf rides out of the steamy mist as Mutt Williams, to claim the mantle of adventurer from his mom's old boyfriend — some geezer named Indy. Mutt isn't impressed.

Crazy or cuddly: Cuddly. Despite a costume stolen almost stud for stud from Brando's getup in "The Wild One," LaBeouf looks more like a



member of the Village People than a dangerous criminal.

DEVIL'S ANGELS (1967)

The biker: Indie film legend John Cassavetes is the leader of a gang that makes a deal with the local sheriff for safe hiding — which works fine until Cassavetes falls for the guy's daughter.

Crazy or cuddly: Cuddly. Cassavetes supposedly used his fee from this movie to finance "Faces" the following year, and it's hard to be scared of a biker with auteurism on his mind.

WILD HOGS (2007)

The biker: John Travolta suits up with the likes of Tim Allen and William H. Macy for a



little road trip — in other words, over-the-hill men heading over the hill.

Crazy or cuddly: Crazy! "You could hurt yourself, grandpa," is the thought most moviegoers kept having. Travolta could *maybe* pull it off, but not with that gang backing him up.

STREETS OF FIRE (1984)

The biker: Michael Paré is a brooding, dangerous outlaw with a fast bike and a yen for the biker chick to end all biker chicks, Diane Lane.

Crazy or cuddly: Cuddly. Turns out this is a rock 'n' roll musical fantasy. Any biker gang that has to dance on rain-drenched streets is incapable of striking fear into anyone.



BATMAN & ROBIN (1997)

The biker: This credibility-crushing edition in the "Batman" franchise topped Robin and the Batnipples by having Valley Girl Alicia Silverstone ride in on a girlie motorcycle so ridiculous even the Joker wasn't laughing.

Crazy or cuddly: Crazy. Watching Robin and Batgirl trade quips while spinning the wheels on their toy bikes ruined for years the possibility of taking "The Dark Knight" seriously.

THE LORDS OF FLATBUSH (1974)

The biker: Sylvester Stallone and other members of a Brooklyn gang in the '50s are joined by Henry Winkler as the wimpily named Butchey Weinstein.

Crazy or cuddly: Cuddly, unfortunately. Not a bad movie, but this led directly to Winkler playing the Fonzy on TV's "Happy Days." And after the Fonzy, no one would be scared of a guy on a motorcycle ever again.

Michael Giltz