

Concert Review

Justin Timberlake

(Honda Center, Anaheim; 6,000 capacity; \$97.50 top)

Presented by AEG Live. Band: Justin Timberlake, Kevin Amunes, Charles Wilson, Kevin Walker, Lloyd Dorsey, Mike Scott, Terry Santiel, John Blackwell, Harvey Marshall, Rob Stevenson, Darrell Adams, Demosh Bennett, Diederik Arts. Guest: Timbaland. Also appearing: Pink. Reviewed Jan. 9, 2006.

By PHIL GALLO

It will take some tough love, strong negotiating skills and brazen self-confidence, but if he's got smarts, Justin Timberlake will fire many of the people who helped him assemble his "FutureSex/LoveSounds" stage show. The

first half of his lengthy Honda Center concert defied staggered logic, charisma and generated an acoustical nightmare. To make matters

worse, a 17-minute "mash-up" of beats and samples follows that, despite the presence producer-rapper Timbaland, sucked all the air out of the room. Timberlake—the hottest male singer in all of pop music and the one with potential staying power—does manage to redeem himself in the second half by keeping the music varied, the stage simple and the choreography tight.



Timberlake

The music, as was the case with 'N Sync's elaborate stage shows, feels secondary in the bulk of this theatrical concoction. Indeed the highlights—nearly all of which were in the second half—involved Timberlake's sweetly executed dance steps in tandem with

his nine-member troupe and some smart use of scrimms and beamed images that engaged the audience. Choreography, which is top-notch throughout if a bit derivative in spots, is refreshingly non-sexual—a contrast to many of Timberlake's libido-fueled tunes.

Opening number "FutureSex/Love Sound" has a grandness in the presentation that sets the table with an appropriate message: This is a big, *big* show—all the stops have been pulled. Rather than refine and then amplify elements of the opening presentation, the next 40 minutes are muddy and non-engaging, save for a strong perf of "What Goes Around," a demonstration of how ably Timberlake can distill classic soul music pleading with contempo beats and a nicely defined groove.

What's disturbing is how little Timberlake wants to assert an identity in the concert's early-going. Nearly every first-act tune is reliant on mechanical beats and when

Film Review

Bandidas

(France-Mexico-U.S.)

A 20th Century Fox release of a Europa-Corp production in association with TFI Films with the participation of Canal Plus and TPS Star. Produced by Luc Besson, Ariel Zeitoun. Directed by Joachim Roennig, Espen Sandberg. Screenplay, Luc Besson, Robert Mark Kamen. Camera (color, widescreen), Thierry Arbogast; editor, Frederic Thorval; music, Eric Serra; production designer, Hugues Tissandier; art direction, Patrick Pasquier; costume designer, Olivier Bertot; sound (Dolby Digital/DTS), Santiago Nunez, Marc Antoine Beldent; assistant director, Rene Villareal; casting, Lou DiGiaino, Carla Hoel. Reviewed on DVD, Houston, Jan. 9, 2007. MPAA Rating: PG-13. Running time: 93 MIN.

Maria Alvarez Penelope Cruz
Sara Sandoval Salma Hayek
Quantin Cook Steve Zahn
Tyler Jackson Dwight Yoakam
Bill Buck Sam Shepard
Ashle Denis Arndt
Charisa Audra Blaser
Don Diego Ismael "Eag" Carlo Pedro Carlos Cervantes
Padre Pablo Jose Maria Negrí
Regulator Joseph D. Reitman
(English dialogue)

Turn to page 21

VARIETY.COM ■ 21

Film Review

Bandidas

Continued from page 8
entirely unresponsive) criminologist. For the record, Zahn compares himself with remarkable aplomb when his character is tied naked to a bed while the *bandidas* take turns smooching him.

Displaying similar professionalism, Hayek and Cruz give more to "Bandidas" than it ever gives them. Pic overall is curiously flat and uninvolved, but the leads try their best to bring sizzle to the fizzle. (Wipe that smile off your face—they remain at least partially clothed in every scene.)

They're graceful enough to suggest they could have handled far more physical comedy—a scene where they dive into a river from a great height is only the most obvious quote from "Butch and Sundance"—and they do much to make their inevitable friendship seem at least halfway believable. (Even so, they're not likely to replace Brigitte Bardot and Jeanne Moreau in the hearts of those die-hard fans who still think Louis Malle's slightly similar "Yiva Maria!" got a burn rap from critics back in 1965.)

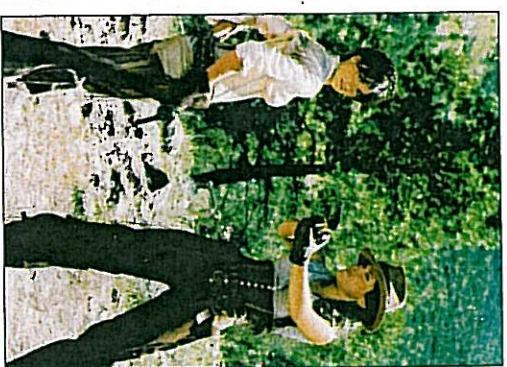
Except for a climactic shoot-out aboard a train, co-directors Joachim Roennig and Espen Sandberg do little more than keep the actors



Steve Zahn plays a criminologist in "Bandidas," produced and co-written by Luc Besson and now on DVD after a brief summer U.S. run.

from bumping into each other. Indeed, the thespians appear to have been left pretty much to their own devices: Yoakam visibly strains for over-the-top flamboyance (in black wig and mustache, he suggests a rather more butch Marilyn Manson)

but remains doggedly earthbound. Standout tech credits include attractive widescreen lensing of Mexico locations by Thierry Arbogast and a sporadically witty score by Eric Serra with hints of spaghetti-Western twanginess.



Penelope Cruz and Salma Hayek shoot 'em up as novice robbers in period comedy "Bandidas."

By JOE LEYDON

Regarding "Bandidas," a nominal action-comedy that fails to provide either excitement or amusement, one is tempted to reference the old joke about the movie that was so bad, it wasn't released—it escaped. Produced and co-written by Luc Besson, femme variation of "Butch Cassidy" and the Sundance Kid" received spotty international release in 2006, but has finally surfaced Stateside as, for all practical purposes, a direct-to-video release. (Pic received fleeting domestic exposure last September through Cinema Latino theater chain.) Top-billed Penelope Cruz and Salma Hayek gamely expose acres of cleavage, but even that may not be enough to lure buyers and renters.

Set in Mexico a hundred or so years ago, the scenario by Besson and frequent collaborator Robert Mark Kamen focuses on two sexy señoritas—Maria (Cruz), the cunning but uneducated daughter of a peasant farmer, and Sara (Hayek), the smart but spoiled child of a wealthy banker—who improbably evolve into bickering bank robbers. They turn to crime impulsively, and none too competently, after a sinister gringo land-grabber (Dwight Yoakam) employed by U.S. business interests causes the death of Sara's father and the near-fatal wounding of Maria's dad. Maria sees bank robbery as a way to redistribute wealth to other dispossessed peasants. At first, however, Sara's motives have more to do with personal revenge than revolutionary justice.

Even after Sara's radicalization, the *nuevas bandidas* still need some help in honing their criminal skills. Fortunately, they're able to locate a retired robber (Sam Shepard, in an effortlessly appealing cameo) who gives them a crash course in grand larceny. Better still, they're able to persuade a brainy, buttoned-down criminologist (Steve Zahn) who's on their trail to switch sides and provide assistance.

Pic devotes a great deal of time to catty sniping between the female leads, but the give-and-take is too often tedious. The only really funny scenes involve the running gag of competitive kissing, as the lovely ladies vie to perform the best lip-lock on the easily befuddled (but not

Turn to page 21