Saudi film festival postponed after sandstorm

T he launch of Saudi Arabia’s main film festival has been postponed to next week due to a sandstorm, organizers said yesterday. The opening of the fourth Saudi Film Festival, slated to run from March 23-28 in the Gulf coastal city of Dhahran, was suspended after the storm hit the kingdom earlier this week. The festival will now open on Monday and run for six days. This is the third consecutive annual film festival in Saudi Arabia after a hiatus of seven years. The kingdom late last year began a cautious push to introduce entertainment, despite opposition from Muslim hardliners. Among the events on offer for Saudi spectators have been the New York theatrical group Ascape, which re-opened to the performance rights organization ASCAP, Kandi Burruss, Tameka Cottle aka Tiny and Kevin Briggs have been added as co-writers of “Shape of You,” co-written by Sheeran, Steve Mac and John McDaid. “Shape of You” is currently on top of the Billboard Hot 100 chart. Representatives for Sheeran and ASCAP didn’t immediately respond to emails from The Associated Press seeking comment.

T he songwriters behind TLC’s 1999 megahit “No Scrubs” are now listed as co-writers of Ed Sheeran’s No. 1 hit “Shape of You.” On the website for performance rights organization ASCAP, Kandi Burruss, Tamela Cottle aka Tiny and Kevin Briggs have been added as co-writers of “Shape of You,” co-written by Sheeran, Steve Mac and John McDaid. “Shape of You” is currently on top of the Billboard Hot 100 chart. Representatives for Sheeran and ASCAP didn’t immediately respond to emails from The Associated Press seeking comment.

In this combination photo, musician, songwriter and TV personality Kandi Burruss, left, appears at the OK! Magazine’s So Sexy Party in June 1, 2016 in New York and musician Ed Sheeran appears at the iHeartRadio Music Awards on March 5, 2017, in Inglewood. — AP

CHiPs TV fans are poised to hate it the film

H ardcore “CHiPs” fans hate it and the real California Highway Patrol seems not quite sure what to make of it. But Larry Wilcox, who rode his motorcycle to everlasting fame in the old “CHiPs” TV series, says that for now, he’ll give the benefit of the doubt to “CHiPs,” the forthcoming film based loosely - very loosely - on the show that made him and Erik Estrada two of the biggest stars of the 1970s and early ’80s.

“I have not seen the film but the trail- ers looked like a soft-porn version of ‘Dumb and Dumber.”’ Wilcox said recently. “However, I hear the actors are both very talented and funny, so maybe it will work.” Fans of the original show, still widely seen in reruns and on DVD, are far less forgiving. They’ve been posting angry messages all over the internet since the first trailers for the R-rated action comedy emerged, calling it garbage and disrespectful to police officers everywhere. In a lengthy “open letter” to Dax Shepard, Sue Walsh of New York accuses the film’s writer, director and co-star of mocking the original show with a ridiculous remake filled with nudity, penis jokes and raunchy bathroom humor. (She left out big-breasted women but they’re in there, too) “CHiPs” was not just a ’70s cop show. It wasn’t Shakespeare, no, but it did and does mean a whole lot to a whole lot of people,” said Walsh, who is organizing a 40th anniversary reunion of the show this fall that most of the original cast is expected to attend.

From family-friendly to raunchy

To understand why fans are so upset, one must remember what a gentle, family-oriented show “CHiPs” was. CHP Sgt Jon Baker (played by Wilcox) and his partner, Estrada’s Officer Frank “Ponch” Poncherello, were hunky young straight-arrow cops cruising sun-splashed, surprisingly uncrowded LA freeways on their motorcycles when not cracking jokes or flirting harmlessly with cute female sheriff’s deputies.

To the thump of a persistent disco track, Baker and Ponch kept busy rescuing people from cars, occasionally solving folks’ personal problems and frequently chasing down miscreants before carting them off to jail without ever drawing their weapons. “I know that there are people that grew up watching ‘CHiPs’ and that was part of the reason they decided to join the department,” said CHP spokesman Fran Clader, “I watched it when I was growing up.”

In the film version, however, Shepard and Michael Mena’s Baker and Ponch are anything but straight arrows. They accidently destroy vehicles, cause fiery crashes, blow stuff up and sometimes shoot the wrong people. “I understand it’s a broad comedy,” said Clader, adding she hasn’t seen the film and won’t offer an opinion on the trailer.

She said the CHP did grant the producers some technical assistance, for which the agency was reimbursed. But there’s also this disclaimer at the beginning of “CHiPs.” “This film is not based on the California Highway Patrol. At all.”

And sharp-eyed fans will notice the title punctuation of “CHiPs” was changed from the original “CHiPs,” further distancing the film from the department. Estrada, who has a cameo, did not respond to multiple phone and email messages. But in a video clip from a recent premiere, he described it as “a movie you have to view with your adult sense of humor.” As for Wilcox, he says he’ll probably see it - eventually. “I think I will wait for the video,” he added. — AP

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Michael Pena, left, and Erik Estrada pose at the Los Angeles premiere of “CHiPs” at the TCL Chinese Theatre on Monday, March 20, 2017. — AP

Haim Saban, creator of the “Power Rangers,” poses at a ceremony honoring him with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on Friday, March 22, 2017, in Los Angeles. — AP

‘No Scrubs’ writers get added to Sheeran hit ‘Shape of You’

In this combination photo, musician, songwriter and TV personality Kandi Burruss, left, appears at the OK! Magazine’s So Sexy Party in June 1, 2016 in New York and musician Ed Sheeran appears at the iHeartRadio Music Awards on March 5, 2017, in Inglewood. — AP