Imagine lands at Uni again

Critics Circle finds ‘Vegas,’ Cage glittering

By Leo Saslaw
NEW YORK — MGM/UA's "Leaving Las Vegas" was voted best film of 1995 by the New York Film Critics Circle on Thursday, with Nicolas Cage winning best actor honors for his portrayal of a self-destructive alcoholic in the film. It was the second award in two days for Cage, who a day earlier was honored by the National Board of Review.

"Sense and Sensibility's" Ang Lee also won for the second day in a row, capturing best director honors for his work on the Jane Austen adaptation. Lee also was

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First-look deal covers 6 years

By Stephen Galloway
In the wake of the phenomenal success of "Apollo 13," Imagine Entertainment has signed a new first-look deal with Universal Pictures that will cover the next six years.

At the same time, Imagine co-CEO Ron Howard's services as a director will now be exclusive to Universal for that period, with the exception of one film that has yet to be determined. "He has one 'out' during the six years to direct another film," Imagine co-CEO Brian Grazer said Thursday. That does not include Howard's work on "Ransom," now in preproduction at Touchstone Pictures with Mel Gibson starring.

Grazer noted the agreement technically dates from October and replaces a pre-existing first-

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‘Friends’ show up early for WB syndie party

By Steve Brennan
Marking a milestone for the syndication business, Warner Bros. Domestic Television Distribution has carved out a major clearance deal for NBC's hit sitcom "Friends" for its off-network rollout three years from now in fall 1998.

Adding fuel to the fire for "Friends" is the pending sunset of the Prime Time Access Rule, which prompted an early run at the show by several Big Three network affiliates looking for a blue-chip sitcom to play in access. PIFAR avoided affiliating in top 50 markets from airing off-network shows in the primetime access slot.

However, the principal deal

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Tribeca ‘Tale,’ ‘Whoopi’ at Fox

By Lisa de Moraes
Tribeca Prods., under founders Robert De Niro and Jane Rosenthal, is developing a drama series for Fox based on Tribeca's successful small-release feature "A Bronx Tale" as well as a half-hour series with Whoopi Goldberg.

The projects, among several in the works at the company, also include a foray into children's special programming.

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Microsoft paying NBC $220 mil in news pact

By Stephen Battaglio
NBC CEO Robert Wright, at podium, and Microsoft chairman Bill Gates, via video from Hong Kong, as they bowed MSNBC news net.

Microsoft and NBC announced a definitive agreement Tuesday for Microsoft to pay NBC $220 million for a 50% stake in America's Talking, the cable channel the network launched 18 months ago. The new-talk channel will be converted to MSNBC by mid-1996, putting the service in 20 million homes, a staggering launch for any new cable network.

The network also has commit

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