

# CINEMA

## Pumping Iron II: The Women

Conceived, produced and directed by George Butler; written by Charles Gaines and George Butler, based on their book *Pumping Iron II: The Unprecedented Women*; featuring Lori Bowen, Carla Dunlap, Bev Francis and Rachel McLish.

During the second round of competition at the Caesar's Palace World Cup Championship for women body builders, Australian power lifter turned muscle-sculpture Bev Francis steps up on the stage ramp shrouded in darkness, except for some high powered backlight, to the strains of "2001." The music is perfectly appropriate—the sport, which has just recently come into some mark of legitimacy, has never encountered a woman like Francis, a female with a body like that of a male Marvel Comics superhero. Her presence is what director George Butler is really analyzing in *Pumping Iron II: The Women*. One of the judges puts the problem up front—"Who are we to say what looks like a woman and what doesn't?"

Butler's fascinating study exists in a nebulous space between documentary and docu-drama. He has taken the annual World Cup competition, upped the stakes (making this the largest purse ever offered at an official competition), and then coaxed Francis into putting her huge frame and bulging musculature up against the lithe, graceful figures traditionally featured in these competitions. He set the stage for conflict and then put it on celluloid, yet not with the posed objectivity of a standard documentary, but rather with a mix of cinema-verite techniques and feature film story-telling.

The first chunk of *Pumping Iron II* is a rather stilted introductory sequence where Butler presents the four "stars" in supposedly natural situations so we may get to know the personalities before the competition. Unfor-

tunately the contrivances show through too obviously. The situations are mostly staged and the "insightful" conversations where the women share their views on life are so false that you know they are performing for the camera.

### REVIEW

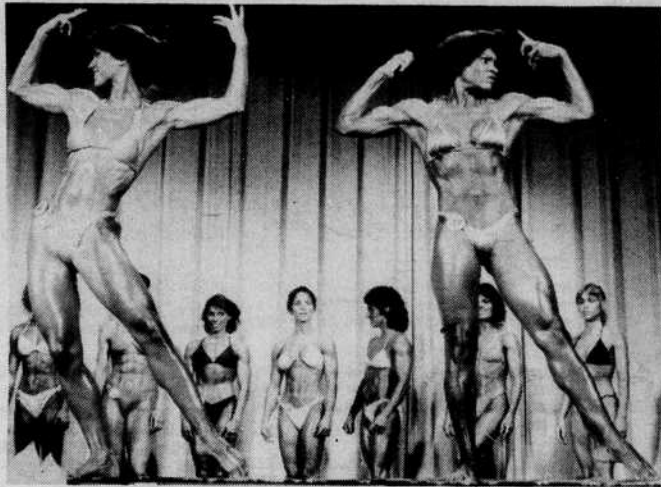
It isn't until they get to Caesar's Palace that the contrivance become fewer and the real personalities show through, especially in the competition sequence, which is totally genuine. Here we see the deeply religious Rachel McLish (the favorite entering the contest) become a slyly scheming competitor using the "Playboy" sleekness of her build to woo the judges and her performance savvy to outmaneuver her competition on-stage.

Just as important to this section of the film is the peek into the

judges' chambers, where they wrestle with the rules and the challenge of Francis. The guidelines specifically call for attention to "femininity," but no one is quite sure how to define the term. In fact the only official advice comes from the senior official, who calls for scoring to strike "right down the middle" of femininity and musculature. Right.

*Pumping Iron II* is about much more than a body building competition. Butler uses the contest as a canvas to explore the broader cultural standards of beauty, aesthetics and what a woman will be "allowed" to look like. Though Butler himself succumbs to the sensationalism he pokes fun at, supplying the picture with an abundance of cheesecake shots and a few quick cuts of unnecessary nudity, his issues are still quite valid. *Pumping Iron II* is funny, fascinating fun as long as you don't take it all too seriously.

—Sean Axmaker



Rachel McLish and Miss France, in a scene from *Pumping Iron II: The Women*.

## NOW showing

**Back to the Future:** A boy trips back to the past, and meets the teenagers who'll become his parents. West 11th (342-4142) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

**The Black Cauldron:** Sword and sorcery stuff from Disney's animation studio. It's been a long time. Walt. West 11th (342-4142) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

**Cocoon:** Old people become young again through contact with benevolent aliens. Stars Maureen Stapleton (*Reds*), Hume Cronyn (*World According to Garp*), Don Ameche and Jessica Tandy. Directed by Ron Howard (*Splash*). National (344-3431).

**D.A.R.Y.L.:** Adventure. A young boy who is part computer has amnesia and drifts into the arms of a foster family. He can't remember what happened and the government is after him. Shows with *The Goonies* at Fine Arts (747-2201).

**Emerald Forest:** Cultures collide as a man searches the Amazon jungle for his long lost son. Based on a true story. Directed by John Boorman (*Excalibur*, *Deliverance*). With *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*. Mayflower (345-1022).

**Fright Night:** Roddy McDowall goes hunting for a vampire, in case you haven't had enough. Cinema World (342-6536).

**The Gods Must Be Crazy:** A small-plane pilot tosses an empty Coke (classic?) bottle out the window. It strikes a bushman in the Kalahari

desert. From this auspicious beginning result terrible tribal difficulties, remarkable encounters, and a memorably different comedy. Cinema World (342-6536).

**The Goonies:** Steven Spielberg produced this exciting adventure for young adults about a group of kids searching for treasure who must outwit the bandits and bank robbers to reach the climactic happy ending. Shot in Astoria, OR. Directed by Ric Donner (*Omen*, *Superman*). With *D.A.R.Y.L.* at Fine Arts (747-2201).

**Lifeforce:** Science-fiction ghouls on the loose. Directed by Tobe Hooper (*Polygeist*). With *Rambo—First Blood Part II*. Oakway (342-5351).

**Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome:** This is Mel Gibson's third fling as Australia's postapocalyptic hero. Eternal rock star Tina Turner provides the challenge. Be ready for lots of violent action. With *Emerald Forest*. Mayflower (345-1022).

**The Makioka Sisters:** Four daughters in pre-war Japan try to sustain their way of life despite the encroachment of Western values. Cinema 7 (687-0733).

**My Science Project:** Starts this week at Cinema World (342-6536) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

**National Lampoon's European Vacation:** Chevy Chase takes his family for another trip. Sequel to *Vacation*. West 11th (342-4142).

**Pee-Wee's Big Adventure:** TV nerd Pee-Wee Herman stumbles onto the silver screen, where he's out to recover stolen goods. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

**Pumping Iron II: The Women:** A fascinating documentary of the female bodybuilding championship. Women as they are not often seen; goals that are not often desired. At its heart, a re-examination of femininity. Shows at the Bijou (686-2458).

**Rambo—First Blood Part II:** If you liked *Code of Silence*, you'll love *Rambo*. This film picks up where *First Blood* left off—that is, with Sylvester Stallone in prison for shooting apart a whole town. The government hires Rambo to go to Vietnam and get proof of POW's. With *Lifeforce* at Oakway (342-5351).

**Real Genius:** A brilliant college prankster gets even with a nasty professor. A mind is a terrible thing to waste. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

**Return of the Living Dead:** So who invited them back? Sneak preview Friday at Valley River Twin (686-8633).

**The Rocky Horror Picture Show:** The King of the kinky cult musicals plays Eugene for the umpteenth time. Late show through Saturday at the Bijou (686-2458).

**Silverado:** A real Western, for Pete's sake, with touches of humor and tenderness. Written and directed by Lawrence Kasdan (*The Big Chill*), and featuring a fine cast. At Cinema World (342-6536).

**Summer Rental:** Starts this week at Springfield Quad (726-9073).

**Weird Science:** The "perfect woman" is created by two teenage boys. Experts, I suppose McDonald (344-4343).

—Michael Sussmar

**CINEMA 7 687-0733**

Premiere  
Director: Kon Ichikawa  
(Japan 1983)  
35 mm 130 min.

Shows: Fri. & Sat. 7:00 & 9:30 pm  
Sun.-Thurs. at 8:00 pm  
Sunday matinee 2:00 pm

"Kon Ichikawa's film is an elegant rendering of an epic Japanese novel by Junichiro Tanizaki chronicling the lives of four sisters in 1930 Osaka. Sons of a once-wealthy shipbuilding family, the sisters face not only the obligation and honor of marriage, but its economic imperative. While the sisters are occupied trying to maintain a semblance of tradition in the face of encroaching westernization, Japan is gearing up for the war that will render all these concerns obsolete. Brilliant performances, rich attention to period detail and costume, and the catalogue of emotions associated with Japanese manners, accent a drama of complex interaction." 1984 PORTLAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL "The most pleasurable movie I've seen." *Pauline Kael, THE NEW YORKER*

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Presenter:  
TOM BIRKENHEAD has a Bachelor of Science and a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) from the University of Southern California. In addition to his six years at Lane Community College teaching business and management courses, he has 15 years of supervisory, management and consulting experience in small to large international companies.

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To register, call LCC at 484-2126, ext. 595