

LANE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESENTS

BYEBYE BIRDIE

The Sparkling 1960 Musical About Elvis

Directed by Patrick Torelle
Nathan Cammack, Music Director
Nicola Foster, Choreographer

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JANUARY 23, 24, 28, 29, 30, 31 8:00 P.M.

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by Harold Pinter

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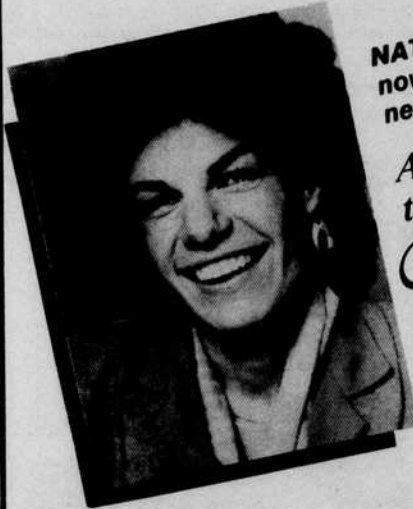
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CINEMA

The Mission

Review by Richard Wilen

It is 1750, deep in the verdant jungles of South America. The European powerbrokers of Spain and Portugal are conniving to best each other in the exploitation of the vast wealth of a God-forsaken land populated by heathen Indians. It is a world of slave-traders, mercenaries, pompous colonial administrators, and wealthy merchants.

In their midst walk the foot soldiers of the church, Jesuit missionaries, seeking to provide salvation for the indigenous Indian tribes. These are very different men indeed, men who see the natives as noble spirits to be brought to the glory of God, not to the enslavement of Europeans.

The Mission is a story of the collision of these two worlds and the brutal colonization of South America. It features Jeremy Irons as Father Gabriel, a priest who steadfastly devotes himself to the development of a mission among the tribes of the deep interior, and Robert DeNiro as Rodrigo Mendoza, a repentant slave-trader who seeks salvation from his sins in the service of the Order.

Shot on location in Columbia, this film offers an incredibly rich tapestry of visual sights. The cinematography is quite wonderful. Spending epic amounts of money, producer David Puttnam and director Roland Joffe (*Killing Fields*) have created a dazzling display of both history and nature.

The real star of their film is a towering waterfall which separates the white world from the jungle vastness of the Indians. Serving as both a visual and symbolic anchor, this waterfall and the surrounding jungle embody much of the real substance of the film.

Unfortunately, the story does not really measure up to the high standard established by the ambience of the cinematography. I found it somewhat ponderous and had a difficult time getting involved. There were many sequences which I liked very much, but others which had me drifting off.

The acting also was merely adequate, although there were some fine dramatic moments, particularly by Robert DeNiro. In evoking the transformation of the base Rodrigo, DeNiro's emotional inten-

sity injects some fire into the film. But overall the characterizations were fairly two-dimensional. Jeremy Irons plays his role understated, and the effect was not overly inspirational.

The indigenous Indians figure prominently in the film, but are rarely allowed to truly emerge from the background. The film clearly carries on the cinematic tradition of the noble savage. They are portrayed alternately as fierce savages and spiritual innocents. But, with very few exceptions, they do not emerge as people in their own right. Even Father Gabriel manipulates them, turning them into canaries singing hymns in a language they don't understand.

The Mission was awarded the Palme d'Or for best film at the Cannes Film Festival. Whether it truly deserves such a high accolade is debatable. It is an ambitious film which works very well on some levels. Visually it is stunning, and this alone makes it a film worth seeing. But many viewers will be worn down by the ponderous pace and tepid acting.

Little Shop of Horrors

Review by Lois Wadsworth

A musical horror-comedy from the stage becomes a charming, hilarious movie under the direction of Frank Oz (*The Muppets Take Manhattan*).

Little Shop of Horrors has a simple plot. A bumbling young clerk in a flower shop on Skid Row discovers a magical Venus-fly-trap-like plant which grows up to be a man-eater. He is hopelessly in love with a not-too-bright co-worker who has a mean-ass boyfriend. Enough about the plot—you get the drift.

What the movie lacks in plot, it more than makes up for with its snappy, classy look and musical numbers, plus a couple of outrageously funny scenes with Steve Martin and Bill Murray.

The picture is set in the early 1960's. Three women singers with the Motown-sound period hairdos

and spicy outfits are worth the price of admission just for their stylishly staged musical pieces. Rick Moranis plays the nerd who wants so badly to get out of his rut that he feeds his own blood to the thirsty little plant he's adopted. Ellen Green as the dumb blonde he's in love with could have just stepped out of *Guys and Dolls*. Her fantasy of getting married and living in a house out of *Better Homes and Gardens* brilliantly captures the essential feminine sentiment of the era.

The funniest performances are shared by Steve Martin as the sadistic dentist, Bill Murray, and John Candy. The devilish plant turns out a good performance as well, with Levi Stubbs of the Four Tops providing the voice. I haven't seen the stage show, but it's hard

to imagine a more monstrously lovable plant than this.

The picture has been around for a month or so now, but it's the kind of film you could see more than once with no ill effects. It has an off-beat appeal that attracts the label "cult favorite." I've seen some of these so-called "cult" favorites (*Rocky Horror Picture Show*, for example), and usually they're pretty good. You don't have to be a teenager to like this picture, though it might help.

I'm told that the ending is different in the film than in the stage production, and for sure it's different than Roger Corman's original 1960 *Little Shop of Horrors* on which the play is based. You know, good old Hollywood just wants to give the public a happy ending whether they like it or not.

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