

Peeping Tom
Directed by Michael Powell
Playing at The Bijou

The title *Peeping Tom* evokes a sexual allusion of one who derives sensual pleasures from observing others. Yet director Michael Powell's film quickly defers this clandestine activity, and creates a lurid, thriller plot — without the sex.

While *Peeping Tom* lacks the subtlety of a convincing thriller,

it proceeds at an absurdly detached pace — almost as if it were a recurring terrible dream.

To start, photographer Mark Lewis portrays a psychotic voyeur who films women while he's murdering them. His role as the killer is evident from the beginning, for Powell's intent is to dispel motivation as the source of the film's mystique rather than the identity of the killer.

Lewis is the victim of a childhood experiment. His father, a noted psychologist, had recorded the growth of his son, filming the boy's reaction to fear in varied and contrived settings. Lewis' demented state is a result of the experiment.

At times the film seems almost surreal as it follows Lewis through his daily movements, living life from behind the lens of a movie camera. Yet, the characters are unconvincing; mock

terror in victim's faces is prevalent as Lewis attempts to induce fear before killing them.

A change in Lewis' life occurs when he meets tenant Helen Stephens, who attempts to reach Lewis with compassion and ardor, and actually succeeds, causing him to re-evaluate his life many murders too late. Stephens is accompanied by her clairvoyant, blind mother who steals into Lewis' dark room: a secret chamber of

cameras, films and projectors; a manifestation of the abysmal complexities within the photographer's mind.

While Lewis' absurd condition is real enough, the rest of the cast seems pretentious and contrived. The laconic dialogue between characters is static and only the aloof Lewis is able to carry the film into a decisive realm — one of humorous fear and relative illusion.

— James Jiler

La Cage Aux Folles II
Starring Michel Serrault
and Ugo Tognazzi
Directed by Edouard Molinaro
Playing at Valley River Twin

Calling *La Cage Aux Folles II* a disappointment wouldn't be fair, but then again calling it a sequel wouldn't be entirely fair either.

Scriptwriter Francis Verber takes the cast of *La Cage Aux Folles I* and thrusts them headlong into a farce that resembles an American production rather than a French-Italian production.

Michel Serrault plays Albin, a transvestite who performs in a nightclub that is owned by Renato (Ugo Tognazzi). Albin is despondent over the notion that Renato no longer finds him attractive and sets out to seduce virile young men in the sidewalk cafes of Nice.

Albin is picked up by a man who turns out to be a spy. Minutes later the spy turns out to be a corpse. Before long Albin and Renato (who is never far behind) are caught up in the old spy ring versus spy ring plot complete with cyanide darts, multiple corpses, chase scenes and, yes, the "microfeelm" is what everyone is after.

The couple eventually manages to evade spies and federal agents to flee to northern Italy where they hide out with Renato's mother, who runs a small ranch. Albin, now posing as Renato's new bride, can't win as

he experiences the hardships of being a fieldhand's wife.

La Cage Aux Folles II will appeal to a different audience than its predecessor. The subtle humor is replaced by an overt humor that sometimes approaches slapstick. The thin strand of plausibility that ran throughout *La Cage Aux Folles I* is replaced by an uninhibited plot that builds on a series of Hollywood cliches.

La Cage Aux Folles II is not, however, without its great moments: A scene in which a group of French federal agents learn to walk with an air of effeminacy is particularly funny. The key, according to Albin, is a limp wrist and the ability to walk "the tight rope between male and female."

Females, by the way, don't figure into the plot of *La Cage Aux Folles II* too well. Only one woman has a speaking role — that is if you consider a dozen lines a speaking role.

The acting in *La Cage Aux Folles II* is superb. Serrault's acting abilities shine again as he plays Albin, but some of the credit must go to director Edouard Molinaro for milking the transvestite theme. Tognazzi is equally capable as the other leading man.

For those who love farce *La Cage Aux Folles II* should not be missed, but for those expecting the subtle humor and innovative subject matter... *c'est la vie.*

— Paul Feist

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