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HAUNTED HAPPENINGS

'Rocky Horror' to play on Eugene stage

Have you ever been to a movie where people yell "Slut!" whenever the name Janet is said? Or where people do a dance called "The Time Warp" in the aisles during the closing credits?

If you haven't, then according to fans of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, you're probably a "virgin." But that can change if you check out the late-night cabaret production of *The Rocky Horror Show*, which opens tonight and runs through Saturday in downtown Eugene.

In the world of *Rocky Horror*, a "virgin" is someone who has never attended a showing of the famed midnight movie.

The Rocky Horror Picture Show is not a horror flick, but rather a campy, trashy movie that is usually shown at midnight and has acquired a devoted group of followers who dress up as characters in the film and attempt to act along with the movie. Those who are not performing the movie yell remarks at the screen, throw toast, rice, toilet paper and shoot squirt guns.

The play, *The Rocky Horror Show*, will be performed at the Downtown Cabaret. The plot is quite simple, according to Caitlin Franklin, who plays Columbia. Brad and Janet, high school sweethearts, have a flat tire on a deserted road and find themselves in Frank-N-Furter's castle where they learn interesting things about his sexuality and theirs.

Saturday's show, which not so coincidentally falls on Halloween, will be preceded by a costume party in which party-goers are asked to come as either "male, female or sweet transvestite," according to marketing director Mark Langlie, who also plays the part of Brad.

A dance with "ghoul music" will follow the hour-long performance and Halloween desserts will be served as well as beverages and hot food.

Unlike other theatrical events, audience participation is encouraged and expected. Director Joe Zingo wanted to play up the campy humor of the original play while at the same time taking out some of the slow parts that the movie contained.



Fans of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* dress up like their favorite characters from the movie.

Photo by Kim Nguyen

"Part of the excitement is the interaction," Zingo said. "It became a cult thing because the movie is so bad."

Because it is live theater, and it's dangerous and rude to throw things at the actors, the theater has issued a list of acceptable items. These are squirt guns (not high-powered), flashlights, newspapers, noisemakers, balloons, playing cards, pink rubber gloves and toilet paper. Anything else, including alcohol, will be confiscated.

Originally, the movie version of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* was not intended to be such a free-for-all. In fact, it started out as a reasonably respectable play written by Richard O'Brien. According to the booklet that accompanies *The Rocky Horror Picture Show 15th Anniversary Collection*, the play was based on "a combination of horror movies, Steve Reeves muscle flicks and fifties rock 'n' roll."

The collection was put out in 1989 and includes *The Rocky Horror Picture Show Sound Track*, *The Roxy Cast Sound Track* and the *International Rocky Horror Soundtrack*, a collection of songs that have nothing to do with the film, but are

are sung by some of the actors.

The original play ran successfully for many months at The Royal Court Theater Upstairs in London after its opening on June 16, 1973. The cast contained actor Tim Curry as Frank-N-Furter, Richard O'Brien as Riff-Raff, Patricia Quinn as Magenta, Little Nell as Columbia and Jonathon Adams as the Criminologist.

These cast members returned for the movie, joined by then-unknowns Susan Sarandon and Barry Bostwick in the roles of Brad and Janet. Rock singer Meatloaf played the "Rock N' Rollin' Lobotomy Biker." Jonathon Adams switched roles to play Doctor Scott.

Initially the film bombed except in Los Angeles where a small dedicated audience was returning for repeated viewings. The film was then re-introduced as a midnight movie. But even before becoming a late-night event, audience members were singing along with the movie and yelling comebacks at the screen. Thus began the ritual that still follows *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

The Bijou Theater in Eugene ran the movie for many years but discontinued it.

"We stopped running it because it's a nightmare to show," said Louise Thomas, manager of the Bijou. "Good copies are hard to get, it's messy and people wanted to buy advance tickets."

If you plan to attend any of the performances of *Rocky Horror*, be sure to specify if you want tickets in the participation or viewing-only section. An upper section of the small theater is reserved for those who may not know the lines or don't want to be involved. If you want to participate, however, but don't remember all those snappy comebacks, audio tapes were put out that include them along with the dialogue. Check local record stores.

The Actors Cabaret of Eugene will be presenting *The Rocky Horror Show* at the Downtown Cabaret, 966 Willamette Street. The show opens tonight at 11:30 and will run until Nov. 21, Friday and Saturday nights only. Tickets are \$8, except for the Halloween show, which is \$10. Look for the coupon being run in the *Emerald* good for \$1 off. The Halloween costume party begins at 10:30 p.m. For tickets or information, call 687-5000 or 683-4368.

-Carrie Fenelon

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