

Innocent until proven hungry

■ Mystery Theatre 2000 — half dinner, half whodunit, and everyone is a suspect

By Sara Jarrett
Oregon Daily Emerald

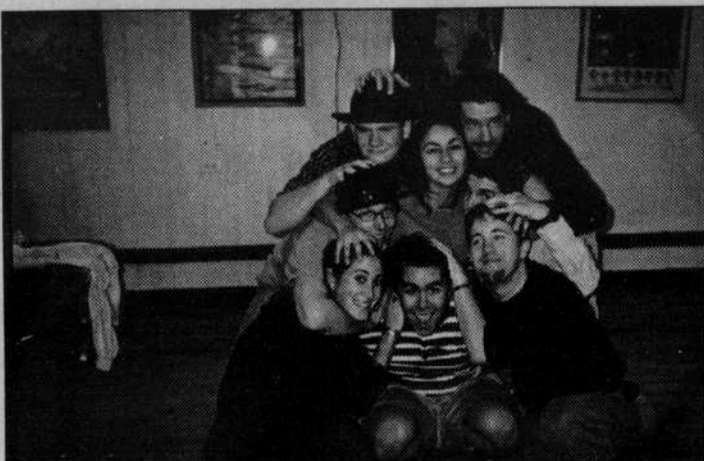
Somebody killed the "Will-work-for-booze guy" in the bathroom of Charley's Comedy Club with a toilet bowl plunger. In the midst of this tragedy, you take a bite of eggplant parmesan and wonder, "Was it me?"

Your own innocence isn't sanctified. Everybody in the room, including the bartender, is a suspect at this point.

As each course of the meal is served, the plot thickens.

Mystery theatre has been likened to a game of real-life Clue, says University alum Chris Miller. He is the founder, director and producer of Eugene's newest acting troupe, self-descriptively called Mystery Theatre 2000.

The group's first show, titled "Death By Chocolate," debuts at Charley's, 44 E. Seventh Ave., on



The Mystery Theater troupe mugs for the camera during a recent rehearsal.

Saturday at 7 p.m., with another show on Sunday at 6 p.m. The \$25 cover charge (\$20 for students) includes dinner and musical entertainment from the Charleen Schneider Jazz Quartet on Saturday and Fritz and The Poor Boys on Sunday. The events are open to all ages.

If the shows draw at least fifty people each night, they will be considered a success, Spencer Whitted says. He owns Charley's and has plans to book Mystery Theatre 2000 one Saturday night a month, until interest wanes.

Miller says the genre's prospects are dependent on the interactive quality of the show.

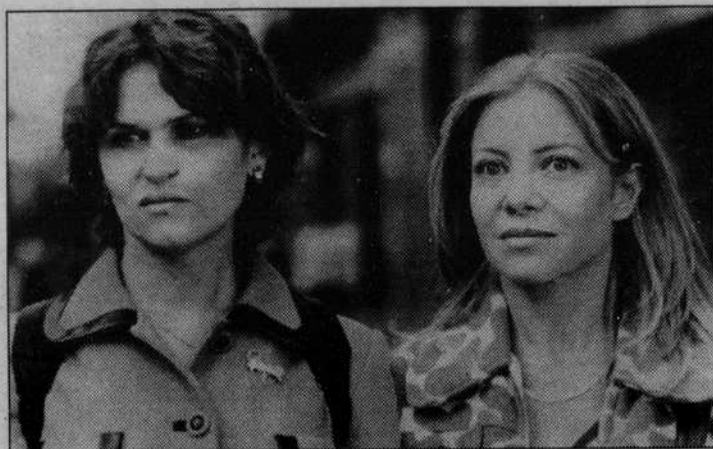
"Without giving too much away," audience members are not merely spectators as they would be during more traditional theatre shows, but vital pieces of the foul play puzzle, Miller offers.

"It's almost a theatre game, but it's more of a performance that will only work with audience participation," says Jim Roberts, a producer at Actors Cabaret of Eugene, another local theatre venue. While ACE has had mystery theatre productions in the past, it's not a part of a normal line-up, he adds.

Mystery theatre "is not usually done on a stage, but in a restaurant, at parties and things like that," Roberts says.

That's the beautiful thing about it, in Miller's opinion.

"We can adapt to any venue," Turn to **Mystery**, page 7B



Antonia San Juan (left) and Cecilia Roth star in 'All About My Mother.'

All about his movie: Pedro gets tragicomic

■ A Spanish director uses nuns and transvestites to explore the nature of grief

By Jack Clifford
Oregon Daily Emerald

Spanish director Pedro Almodovar's movies are worlds apart from just about anything Hollywood could ever puke up, but he's proven that he lives in a different universe with his brilliant new movie, "All About My Mother."

Telling the tale of how a mother deals with the overwhelming emotions she experiences after her only son is killed in a freak accident at age 18, Almodovar takes his main character on a journey through rediscovery, rejuvenation and finally, a form of rebirth.

Manuela is perfectly played by Cecilia Roth — fans of Almodovar's early movies will recognize her from "What Have I Done to Deserve This?" and "Dark Habits" — who captures the grief of a mourning mother. When she leaves Madrid and returns to her son's birthplace of Barcelona to inform his father of the tragedy, Roth really sparkles.

There she bumps into an old friend, La Agrado, Antonia San Juan in her first Almodovar effort. She's a weary transvestite prostitute who wants to leave the streets, as well as her drug habit. Manuela and La Agrado eventually seek help from an overly helpful nun, Sister Rosa (Penelope Cruz).

Sister Rosa has had intimate

contact with Manuela's former lover, Lola, another transvestite, who spurred Manuela's departure 18 years previous with his sudden transformation. Yet, Manuela was carrying Lola's child Estaban, a fact the father never knew.

Sister Rosa becomes pregnant, and Manuela feels obligated to now care for her, but in the meantime, she makes friends with two actresses, Nina (Candela Pena) and Huma Rojo, portrayed by Marisa Paredes, arguably one of Spain's most celebrated stars. Huma and Nina — who just happens to be a heroin addict — star in a long-running production of "A Streetcar Named Desire," a play Estaban loved while alive.

The most rewarding aspect of this movie — other than the fact that it's hilarious, like any other Almodovar offering — is that there is no moralizing.

Transvestites and drug abusers are shown as much respect as nuns, and if the sister just happens to get pregnant, well, Almodovar doesn't even allow the audience to "tsk, tsk." His female characters are always strong, no matter the circumstances.

Another strong point of "All About My Mother" is the way the director blends his scriptwriting with a dazzling array of colors, not just in the background, but also in the characters' clothing styles.

"All About My Mother" opens Friday at the Bijou Art Cinemas. Needless to say, don't miss seeing this movie while it's in town.



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