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Guilt-free escapism

Sister Act is full of sisterly love, independent, strong women, and women who don't need men.



PHOTO BY SUZANNE HANOVER

by Sandra de Helen

The new Whoopi Goldberg film, *Sister Act*, is pure fun — pure as in chaste, pure as in guilt-free escapism. This movie has no graphic sex, no graphic violence. This movie has 300 nuns viewing it and walking out afterwards with 600 thumbs up!

Whoopi plays a mobster's (Harvey Keitel) apparently naive girlfriend who is the lead singer in a sister act called The Ronnelles. Keitel is the mob boss who owns the casino where The Ronnelles perform. He's a married Catholic who won't divorce his wife, and when Goldberg threatens to leave him, he sends a purple mink coat (hiss — but it looked fake) to her dressing room to mollify her. It almost works until she sees the wife's name stitched inside the coat. Steaming, she storms into his office just in time to see a gang-style execution (done '50's movie style so we see no gore) — and the chase is on. She turns him in to the police, they put her in a witness-protection program and send her to a convent.

This could have been a one joke movie Whoopi Goldberg transformed from a bewigged, spike-heeled saloon singer to a habited nun. But when she arrives, she finds Maggie Smith as the Reverend Mother, Mary Wickes as the inept choir director, and Kathy Najemy (of Kathy and Mo, the feminist comedy duo) waiting to be her best friend. The combinations make for unexpected comedic conflict, and Whoopi should be laughing all the way to the bank on this one, even though the newspapers reported she was very unhappy with Disney during the filming.

Whoopi makes her influence felt throughout the convent and they influence her equally. Soon they have transformed each other as well as the entire neighborhood. By the time the mob catches up with Goldberg, they find they have a family of sisters to contend with.

Watching a choir of nuns sing and sway to the '50's favorite "I Will Follow Him" is amusing regardless of one's own spiritual orientation.

For treatment of women, *Sister Act* is full of sisterly love, independent, strong women, and women who don't need men. Like the (real) sisters said: 600 thumbs up!

Written by Joseph Howard; directed by Emile Ardolino; costumed by Molly Maginnis. Produced by Touchstone Pictures; now playing at Act III Theatres around town.





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A new cultural bridge

In its premier issue, *The Feminist Broadcast Quarterly of Oregon* takes up the fight against sexism, racism, homophobia, classism and the culture of violence. *FBQ* is the effort of a local Portland woman to bridge racial, class, cultural and political lines of women.

FBQ starts the battle against oppression at home. "In this magazine, white women are the minority," writes Mimi Yahn, the creatrix of *FBQ*. Articles like Anne Sweet's "African Heritage, Working Class in a White Progressive Movement" are rare even in the progressive press. In a day when multiculturalism is fashionable, *FBQ* walks its talk with contributions from Native American women, lesbians, African-American women and Latinas. Yahn notes in her letter from the Editor that some people may be uncomfortable with new perspectives. To them she writes, "Listen. Listen not only to what the women are saying, but listen to yourself. Are you offended—or are you threatened?... Now you can start learn-

ing from these wise and wonderful women."

Editor and publisher Yahn originally planned to bring out the first issue of *FBQ* in winter or even next spring. Faced, however, with the climate of hate so apparent in Los Angeles and sponsored locally by the Oregon Citizens Alliance, Yahn decided that now was the time for women's voices to be heard. "We don't have the luxury of working out our differences over ten years," said Yahn. "It's as if we've been put into a time machine and we have a chance to fight the Nazis over again and win in the first rounds."

The Feminist Broadcast Quarterly is available at a number of Portland bookshops including The Catbird Seat Bookstore, the Paper Moon, and Powell's Books. *FBQ* is now taking poems, essays, stories, artwork, photos, etc. for the September issue. For information and/or subscriptions, contact Mimi Yahn at PO Box 19946, Portland, OR 97280 or call 220-6413.

Susan Baker