

Entertainment

"Pigs might fly if they had wings."
-Jaroslav Hasek-

Bitter glitter

Salem Alaton

Woody Allen has always relied on his personal relationship with us. The intimacy has grown with each of his films; it began with the establishing of Allen as a kind of logo who could enter his films assured of response to his familiar screen persona. Like the lovable somnambulist bear of the Travelodge hotel chain, the Allen outline appeared at each stop along the way, horn-rimmed and insecure, Jewish and sexual-obsessive.

There was Allen the flunked criminal of *Take the Money and Run*, Allen the ersatz Castor of *Bananas*, the would-be Bogart of *Play it Again, Sam*, the anxious sperm of *Everything you Always Wanted to Know About Sex*; the locales and scenarios kept changing but the Allen remained the same. In *Sleeper* the audience is devastated even prior to his appearance, as they see an aluminum foil-wrapped automaton with the contours of the familiar horn-rimmed glasses on its face.

Moody, half-formed existential speculations entered his work with two homages to Ingmar Bergman, one comic (*Love and Death*) and one dramatic (*Interiors*). *Annie Hall* digs into the logo to take us further within Allen, now personal and bittersweet. With *Manhattan* the three-dimensional Allen is fully emerged, not least in his role as a very capable filmmaker and *Time* magazine's cover is trumpeting "Comic Genius".

Well, not quite. Now that we are confronted with Allen's 8 1/2 entitled *Stardust Memories*, we must remember how much he does rely on us, and how much we've always been invested in him. The movie contains some of his funniest material and most inventive filmmaking yet, but it is also about a man who is stuck. Like Fellini's film, *Stardust Memories* assesses its director's hectic, often neurotic function, cutting present day pandemonium with daydreams of childhood past. Allen indulges fantasies—there he is directing Charlotte Rampling, kissing Charlotte Rampling—and undermines them, annotating his moves, exposing his backdrops. Sophisticated and sharp, the film weaves failing relationships and weary sentiment with the pressures of celebrity and introspection on the comic's role. The fusion of melancholy and humour which had always been somewhat stroboscopic in his films is here complete.

The success of the personal evaluation in *Stardust Memories* carries an onus of responsibility, however; Allen has pushed too far inward to simply leave his questions dangling. His subject has always been himself, firstly created as a trademark persona, used against changing settings, then fleshed out to an actual character—now he has cashed all his chips. To return, at this point, to the flatter Woody of the previous films could still make for further comic movies, but it would be an admission that Allen has painted himself into a corner. Perhaps he has, and no more films can be forthcoming; yet there has been too much growth during his last efforts to believe that.

Insanity fare

Lloyd Wasser

Rarely has a film displayed as much caring and emotion as does *Ordinary People*; Robert Redford's triumphant directorial debut. The film, based on a novel by Judith Guest, is a sensitive, honest look at the disintegration of a family under the stress of crisis.

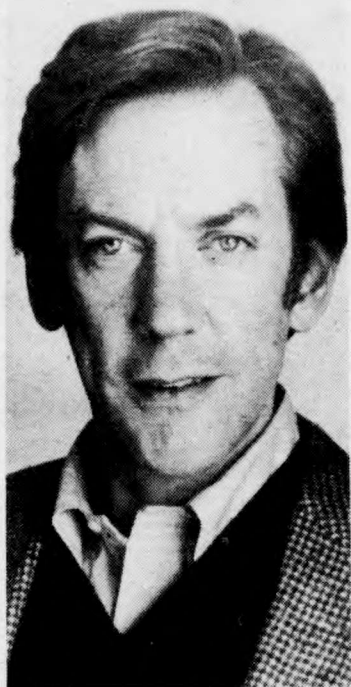
The Jarretts are the ideal average American family. Then tragedy strikes. Son Buck dies in a boating accident. Unable to cope with his brother's death, Conrad attempts suicide and is placed in a home for the emotionally disturbed.

Ordinary People examines Conrad's return to home and reality as he attempts to cope with the world around him. It takes us into the heart of a family struggling to deal with the implications of its own tragedies. The film is a believable, compassionate study of one boy's dark journey back from the brink of madness.

The actors make this film what it is. In a startling role reversal, Mary Tyler Moore tackles the part of the coldly efficient Beth with great skill. "I think it can be saved—it's a clean break," she says of a dish she's dropped in one scene. The dish symbolizes her broken family and her futile attempts to repair it. Donald Sutherland handles the role as Calvin with equal dexterity; showing us a caring, loving father figure. Timothy Hutton offers a stunning portrayal of the hauntingly obsessed Conrad.

But the film works because of Robert Redford's fine direction. He uses sight and sound beautifully, and combined with his choice of splendid camera positioning, his images emit a screen sensitivity rarely seen today. The script by Alving Sargent (*Julia*, *Sterile Cuckoo*) surpasses the book in terms of emotion and dramatic intensity.

It is an honest film—beautifully made, lovingly conceived and compassionately presented. *Ordinary People* is far from ordinary—it's a masterpiece.



Bley: the innovator



Elliott Lefko

Leisurely biting off a piece of mango, pausing to savour its exotic taste, Carla Bley is a picture of concentration.

It is with similar attention to pleasure that the globally known jazz composer attacks the alto saxophone. As she musically parades through the creepy aisles of a downtown theatre during a recent concert her presence radiates electricity. Carla Bley is not a musician. She is music.

Backstage amid a festive atmosphere Bley roams, burning with concert energy. She announces that the interview must follow in the rhythms of the preceding concert. Crowding around a small table, Bley, her nine-piece band and myself tangle ourselves in a web of six different conversations that my recorder valiantly attempts to cover, to no avail.

With genuine enthusiasm Bley comments on the fact that she couldn't find a Canadian national anthem to play for the Toronto

audiences. Instead, she explains, she substituted bits and pieces of the British and French anthems. Gamefully, I offer her our anthem, breaking into a few verses, while she busily scrawls the notes on paper. Happy at the discovery Bley radiates a large smile and proceeds to introduce me to Canadian artist, filmmaker and musician Michael Snow, and Bley collaborator (*Escalator Over the Hill*), writer Paul Hines.

Escalator is a thematic project that combined the talents of Jack Bruce, Don Cherry, Linda Ronstadt, John McLaughlin, Gato Barbieri among other. Perhaps the first rock opera mixed a blend of romanticism and humour in a hard-driving package.

At 42, Bley has managed to express herself in many musical areas. "I was contributing material to jazz musicians including Paul Bley, and George Russell, during the early sixties. Progressing in the late sixties I wrote for the Charlie Haden Liberation Orchestra."

During the seventies Bley varied her time with challenging pursuits. Firstly she collaborated with composer, trumpet player and present husband Mike Mantler, extending her fascination with words and music. Together the pair recorded albums, putting to music the works of writers such as Samuel Beckett and T.S. Eliot.

The collaboration with Mantler grew into a full-time occupation. Together they formed the Jazz Composers Orchestra. The New Music Distributing Service (distributing close to 200 labels from Canada and the United States, and finally their own Watt Records).

While Bley has worked overtime turning her dreams into reality, others have watched with wide eyes and drooping jaws.

Vibes wizard Gary Burton recorded an album solely made up of Bley's tunes in 1976, entitled appropriately *Dreams so Real*. Burton's youthfully brilliant quartet took the compositions to a ripeness with fevered work throughout.

Another musical friendship for Bley began on a sunny day a few years back in a garden party somewhere in Europe, when she sat at a piano with Brian Eno and Elton Dean singing bawdy ballads. Bley loved Eno's voice and later contributed to one of his early albums.

A famous composer once went to a Bley show but found it too loud inside the hall. Instead John Cage chose to stand outside, pacing back and forth, regulating volume according to his own whims.

While Bley's work stands on the eclectic border of contemporary music so in the world of cinema do the films of Alexandro Jodorowski. Sad, subtle and surrealistic, his *Holy Mountain* is an engrossing look into madness. The score, essential to the dramatic feel of the movie, was written by Don Cherry and performed on piano by Bley.

Looking back at her varied career Bley reasons: "I don't strive for something I cannot attain. I don't have dreams, only my reality."

Slick Mas hides knees

Mike Rullman

The Carolyn Mas concert at Founder's College on Monday night started fashionably late. However, the two scheduled shows were reduced to one due to contract and communications breakdowns. Initially it appears that promoters for the upcoming Carolyn Mas/Robert Palmer concert at Massey Hall were worried about overexposure and losing their market. Founder's Student's Council were not notified of this change from the contracted agreement until Monday morning. Things were still up in the air right until the start of the show. Founder's Student Council is investigating the matter and will decide upon an appropriate course of action.

When the band finally took the stage they were attired in all the classic new wave-isms, except for the denim drummer who has obviously never heard of Le Chateau. Mas bounced around the stage, her almost-blond hair flying in dozens of directions, yet she failed to work up much of a sweat. Yet she must work hard because she forgot to take off her knee pads before coming on stage. The show was predictable, a slick piece of American packaging. New wave is a moving commodity these days and the poppish strains of Mas' material was a perfect background for a couple up front to use their

advanced disco moves from 1978. And to think that new wave's punk roots were the antithesis of disco. The structured show biz approach of the show was very apparent and Mas only stretched her boundaries near the end as she scampered across the tables.

Mas has a competent back-up that provides a good framework for showcasing her strong voice. Although she romped back and

forth with the members of the band they did nothing really spectacular; they are just the vehicle for the star. The crowd appreciated her act enough to request three encores but even then there was a spark of anticipation missing, an

undeveloped intensity. Next time Carolyn, wear your knee pads with conviction.

Everything's groovy?

Vivian Bercovici

From an artistic standpoint the Paul Simon-featured *One Trick Pony* is an ambitious and successful retrospective film.

Sloppy editing and photography, often integral features of "rock" and "concert" films are welcome omissions from this one.

Simons' film and newly-released album deal with the waning popularity of the '60s artist and subsequent struggles with the music moguls of today. Simon as Jonah is unrelentingly hassled from every angle; his wife Marion demeans him for never having outgrown adolescence, reviewers euphemistically refer to him as having "lost his flame", while the kingpins of the recording industry brand his music "gutless". Their financial concerns fail to distinguish

between music and spectacle, "as long as it sells records."

Emphasizing an already cynical industry, Lou Reed, the die-hard rock 'n' roll animal of the '60s is cast as an up-and-coming young producer who seemingly convinces Levin to refuse his artistic morals in favour of commercialism. The B-52's also appear in the film, perhaps indicative of the indomitable youthful rebelliousness and individualism which Simon tries unsuccessfully to cling to.

Judging by his album, film and recent concert, Simon seems to have succumbed to the pressures of big business and commercialism, despite his artistic achievements. Perhaps this multi-faceted project is his conscientious attempt at justifying what might be labelled a "sell out".