

Scorcese scores a bull's-eye on cinema dartboard

Who has the last laugh in the King of Comedy?

MARSHALL GOLDEN

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
But to know the place for first time

John Fowles

The people of America want an identity. We know this is true because they have been searching for one so loudly and for so long, especially in the movies.

In *Gone With The Wind*, David O. Selznick sought the identity of the south and in *Apocalypse Now*, Francis Ford Coppola explored the values behind Viet Nam.

Of course, not all cinematic cultural explorations have been as successful as the latter. In fact, most have been garbage and have missed their mark by a mile. But, for the past eight years, Martin Scorcese has been throwing 99's on the cinema's dart board and with *King of Comedy*

he has scored a bull's-eye.

The King of Comedy is, perhaps, one of the most disturbing and frightening examinations of what motivates the American public and the frankness of the depiction makes it a truly great film. *King* is about Rupert Pupkin, an awful comic from L.A., whose all-consuming ambition is to appear as the opening act on *The Jerry Langford Show* (Langford is Scorcese's Johnny Carson). Pupkin, tired of being a face in the crowd, tries a number of outrageous (and pathetic) attempts to audition for Langford and when he is turned down for the last time, he kidnaps Langford and holds him hostage in return for the opening spot on the talk show.

It is this vision of the American dream gone amok that makes *King of Comedy* so frighteningly realistic. It is probably the dream of every stand-up comic alive to appear on

the Carson show, but how many would actually kidnap Carson for their own gain? Scorcese believes they exist and has every right to do so. One such American, in a bid for the social spotlight, modelled his attempt after a Scorcese film. His name was John David Hinckley and his attempt on Ronald Reagan's life was straight out of *Taxi Driver*.

Perhaps it was as a sort of penance for this act that Scorcese made *King of Comedy*. It attempts to show the public for what they really are--self-obsessed to the point of danger. One of the most startling images in the film is not Pupkin's kidnapping of Jerry Langford, but rather that the public loved such an "outrageous act". The next week Rupert Pupkin's face was on every magazine cover in existence. He had become a hero.

One of the reasons the *King of Comedy* works so well is Robert De Niro. His portrayal of Rupert Pupkin is devastatingly believable. He gives the character a gleeful pathos that is downright scary--you believe that he is out there. De Niro is showing himself to be a brilliant character actor. It is almost impossible to believe that the same face once played Jake LaMotta in *Raging Bull*.

Plaudits also go to Jerry Lewis as Jerry Langford. In his first serious role in years, Lewis' portrayal of Langford as the on-camera funny-man/off-camera lonely and pestered star is a perfect foil for Pupkin.



Jerry Lewis and Robert De Niro: Two kings of comedy.

Whoever thought that Jerry Lewis would play anybody's straight man?

Martin Scorcese has always been a director obsessed with the American public but never has been so close to its pulse as with *The King of Comedy*. He explodes the myth that the obsessed live only on the Hollywood screen. Scorcese hits you

where you live and he hits hard.

It is reported that Johnny Carson is terrified of the release of *King of Comedy* and with good reason--the same reason any American president should be afraid of *Taxi Driver*. Society is not as well as we'd like to think. *The King of Comedy* is not a funny movie.

...ENTS...

Poor wandering ones at Stong

Pirates of Penzance is playing in the Stong College Junior Common Room, until Feb. 26. As the ads say, "The hit movie is now a stage musical."

Pirates is not just an innocuous operetta, although the characters include the absurdly luscious and virginal Mabel, the virile Pirate King and policemen whose lot is not a happy one.

Written by Gilbert and Sullivan, *Pirates* pokes fun at the foibles of Victorian England such as social posturing, class pretension, and colonial honour.

There are memorable though musically difficult tunes, meaning that the Stong production is an ambitious one. Unlike the movie with Ronstadt and Smith, this *Pirates* will be truer to the composers' intentions. This version might be better than a rock-star vehicle. Performances start at 8:00 p.m. Admission is five dollars for regular admission; three dollars for children and seniors.

Theatre students project in public

York theatre students use *Project Week* to try all the things they never get to do in the classroom setting. This Thursday and Friday the rest of York can see the results, in the Atkinson Studio.

The programme included monologues, scenes from well-known plays such as the *Miracle Worker*, songs from *Victor/Victoria* and more. Some of the scripts are originals, by York students.

Admission is free and starting time is 7:00 p.m. on both evenings. The show may also answer the question "If nothing sticks to Teflon, why does Teflon stick to the pan?"

Workshop for the culturally curious

York students will have a rare chance to watch and participate in a workshop on Haitian, West African and Senegalese dance forms Thursday at 5:00 p.m. in the Vanier studio (rm 202).

Yaa Johnson, a master teacher from New York, will lead the workshop, with the assistance of three live musicians.

Johnson would like everyone to participate but you do not have to be a dancer. All you need is curiosity. This is a very special opportunity work with interact with an exceptional talent and exceptional dances. Admission is a nominal \$3.50.

Gays right or wronged

As part of the *Social Justice* film series, *Track Two* will be shown Thursday, February 24 at 4 p.m. in room 107 of Osgoode Hall.

The film portrays the "struggles" of the gay/lesbian community in Toronto. Released in 1982, this independent production also focuses on the community reaction to police raids on supposedly 'gay' steam-baths. Although hundreds of men were arrested in those raids, few were convicted and the taxpayers paid hundreds of thousands of dollars for the boys in blue to serve and protect.

Shown at the Festival of Festivals, *Track Two* was praised for its technique and content. One newspaper film critic also commented on the reasonable tone of the film.

The title is from the name Toronto police have adopted for the downtown area frequented by gay men and women. Curiously, the area frequented by prostitutes is called Track One, also by the police.

Track Two discusses not only police assumptions but also police policies, which are becoming more belligerent and anti-gay, according to some gay rights activists.

The film supplies one side of the argument.

The excitement and vitality of York events make excellent reading, which is what *Excalibur* is all about. We have the commitment - what we need is the information.

Please contact us at 667-3201 if you are involved in a York/College event.

Carriere and company

Witty dance is easy on the eyes

W. HURST

Montreal dancer/choreographer Diane Carriere and her company *Amarelle* served up an evening of dance that was like nouvelle cuisine--a slight entree, a snippet of meat with fresh side-dishes, a rich but small portion of dessert. Carriere's programme was suitably designed like a menu.

The highlight was *Day Dream and Doodle Dance*. With moans and whimpers, Carriere and partner, Ninoska Gomez, trashed the lugubrious stretches and contortions of modern dance techniques. No deep and meaningful stoicism here, only laughter.

The meat on the programme, *Clin D'oeil*, featured Yves Lalonde, stripping and teasing the audience. Shedding new wave clothes and sunglasses, Lalonde interrupted his grind to ask the audience if they wanted more of his "flesh dance". For a brief raunchy minute, the Brigantine Room sounded like a steamy, smoky strip joint, full of cheering patrons. At the end of *Clin D'oeil*, a woman hides Lalonde's exposed crotch with a briefcase, as the two dancers back off the stage.

Carriere's *Tap Talk* shows just feet and legs, tapping their way through a relationship. They argue,

reconcile, tease and seduce but only by differing rhythms. Although tap-dancing is amusing in its own context, *Tap Talk* is surprisingly fresh and quick: a shuffle ball change has never meant so much.

The dessert *Les creatures de la nuit* starts as dancers shuffle onstage wrapped in tri-coloured unitards. With a Debussy score, the piece begins like a delirious dream and the audience prepares for an assault. By other companies this dance would be a solemn invocation of all that's glorious in Nature. When Carriere enters, dressed in feathers and a draped, shiny dress looking like Mother Nature on acid, this invocation falls apart, riotously Carriere starts to

hoot and calls like a deranged bird.

An evening of humorous dance is a difficult thing to bring off. However, Carriere and her dancers change direction so often, the jokes never run too long. Also, the dancers seem to have a very good time onstage, despite appearing under-rehearsed at times.

Amarelle's programme is short, made up of eight quick, fresh dances and one intermission. The dancers display excellent technique but, more importantly, they also show an understanding of Carriere's wacky humour. She didn't show an evening of dance as art. She was after dance as thoughtful, wry and zany amusement. She got what she wanted, so did the audience.

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by Jim Jacobs &
Warren Casey

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WEEK

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