

## Fade to Black...

# Sans blood, sans brains

### Lloyd Wasser

Two years ago, Irwin Yablans, producer and head of Compass International pictures, hired young director John Carpenter to direct a version of a film he called *The Babysitter Murders*. With a budget of just over \$320,000 and a



"...and when I woke up..."

new script, Carpenter created a modern masterpiece of cinematic suspense.

The film became *Halloween*, and eventually made over fifty million dollars in world-wide distribution.

Last week Yablans released another horror film to cash in on the success of *Halloween*. Titled *Fade to Black*, the focus this time is on a young film fan who has a hard time differentiating between fantasy and reality. Eric Binford (Dennis Christopher of *Breaking*

Away fame) is a young man totally immersed in film culture. His room is a reflection of his life: cluttered and packed full of film memorabilia, movie masks and video cassettes. His idols are Marilyn Monroe, Hopalong Cassidy and other film greats, and his life is spent watching them on his home movie screen, acting out his fantasies in their persona or dreaming about them. Eric Binford is obsessed with popular culture to the point of madness.

Cajoled by his nagging aunt, insulted by people on the street, pushed around by his fellow workers and stood up for a date by a Marilyn Monroe look-alike he meets in a restaurant, it is no wonder Eric eventually slips completely into his movie world and begins to act out his violent fantasies on the people who have wronged him.

He pushes his invalid aunt down the cellar stairs a la Cody Jarrett (James Cagney's character) in *White Heat*; he murders a young prostitute who has insulted him by chasing her in Dracula makeup until she falls to her death; his boss dies of a heart seizure after being chased through his darkened film warehouse by Eric dressed as the Mummy, and a young punk dies when he receives six barrels of a Colt .45 in the stomach from Eric disguised as Hopalong Cassidy.

The film suffers from a bland script, incredibly poor acting and some truly uninventive special effects. *Fade to Black* contains very few of the artistic, technical or cinematic touches that were so vital to *Halloween*.

In one scene, the Marilyn Monroe look-alike is taking a shower. When Eric, in Dracula makeup, creeps into the bathroom and pulls back the shower curtain in true Hitchcock style, the girl screams and Eric drops his fountain

pen, running from the room as the black fluid flows down the drain. Eric only wanted her autograph but the film-goer is set up to believe he was going to murder her. The scene was shot almost exactly the way Hitchcock shot the original shower murder scene in *Psycho*.

The artful cutting in of black and white footage of the films Eric is recreating in several sequences (inserts of the real Hopalong Cassidy while Eric is dressed as him) also helped to take this picture out of the garbage heap and place it alongside some of the better horror pictures (there aren't many!) produced so far this year.

*Fade to Black* tries very hard to entertain, and while it isn't entirely successful in this pursuit it is nonetheless an interesting film. It manages to survive without all the



Look out, Vogue!

blood and brain matter so common to many other horror flicks this year, and that's important if we're to keep a good distance between exploitation and entertainment in the film industry. At times, it's hard to tell the difference.



"Don't cry, it ain't good Etiquette."

## Improvisational theatre...

# Fabes' fabes

### Elliott Lefko

Robert Fabes couldn't sleep, eat, or breathe. He had an idea to do some improvisational theatre on campus and the idea had begun to consume his life with the ferocity of a wild dog ripping his prey.

"So I put up some posters for auditions," he says. "But only eight people turned up. But I didn't care, I wasn't looking for a good turnout. I would have done it if two people showed up."

The show eventually became *Etiquettes* and will debut next Thursday through Saturday at The Sam Beckett Theatre.

Fabes, a second year psychology student, has been involved in experimental theatre for the last five years. An avid York theatre goer, he felt stifled by the constant barrage of conventional theatre offered on campus. "There's nothing wrong with conventional script, actors, and director, but I missed something different," he mused.

Fabes took his idea and tossed it off to the actors. He tried to act as a guide, letting the players do most of the actual work.

The first few rehearsals were slow. It wasn't until he scheduled an all-night rehearsal that things "just clicked."

"Our show is based on ideas that came out that night."

*Etiquettes* examines manners, mannerisms, and the way people behave in society as opposed to the way people behave with friends.

"But I can't say too much," he says cautiously. "I just hope people will come out and experience it."

None of the actors in *Etiquettes* are performance students, although some are in Fine Arts. Fabes hopes that their combined enthusiasm will touch the audience.

And if you've got an idea, do it, says Mr. Fabes: "The Beckett Theatre is there to use. I even got \$100 from Founders College to do the show."

This summer Fabes will construct a skeleton script for *Secrets*, a more structured work he hopes to present next year.

You've got to do something to keep the wolves at bay.

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