

Hollywood cranks out another one

Sphinx
Towne Cinema

review by David Orrell

For connoisseurs of complete rubbish, *Sphinx* is about a young Egyptologist (the sensational Lesley-Anne Down) who sets off to Egypt to study an ancient architect called Menephta. Watching *Miss Down* at work, one is soon led to the conclusion that Egyptology is an advanced form of tourism.

"I'm going to do some research," she announces prettily, as she pulls out her Polaroid camera and begins snapping away at display cases. Unable to photograph Menephta directly, she occupies herself by taking portraits of anything he went near.

Unfortunately her tourism is made difficult for her by the intrusion of the plot, which has been created by Robin Cook, the man who brought you "Coma" and two or three more of the world's worst books.

I am afraid to say that the details of this plot are a little foggy in my mind: Being of the male persuasion, all I clearly recall is Lesley-Anne smiling, Lesley-Anne walking, and, most of all, Lesley-Anne gasping at finding yet another Egyptian in her hotel room, presumably placed there by the plot. However it is consoling to know that, if I was a bit behind with the story, poor Lesley was also never very far ahead: "You mean he's the man who murdered the other man?" she sexily asks some character, to whom the plot has been leaked.

But to list some fleeting impressions, the film concerns the smuggling of antiquities out of Egypt. There is a man called Ahmed (Frank Langella) who is anti-smuggling, and who has an affair

with Lesley-Anne (touch-down!); there is a Frenchman (Maurice Ronet), who is a journalist, but has ambitions to become a smuggler; and there are assorted minor characters, who shoot and stab and slash each other in a brave attempt to generate excitement.

For the greater part of the film *Miss Down* is the observer rather than the object, of their antics, but this is all to change...

The Frenchman is interviewing a fat minor character, while another minor character with a moustache holds him at gunpoint. ("You mean he works for you?" Lesley gorgeously interjects, still trying to get straight what everybody else has given up on.) The fat man, in an attempt to detract attention from himself, suddenly shouts, "Look at her! How did her

clothes get so dirty?"

Lesley is understandably looking pretty worn after a trying night of ultra-tourism that has included among other things being caught without her Polaroid in a cave full of bats and corpses. And from that moment, they all chase after her. Hands up all those who think Robin Cook is a genius!

Frank Langella, who I think is Italian, does a good job as Ahmed, almost looking Egyptian, and Sir John Gielgud makes as large a contribution as can be expected in his lifetime of about four minutes (as a shopkeeper who knows too much).

Lesley-Anne makes a fair attempt at being the clever witty Egyptologist demanded by the plot, but somehow she doesn't seem that sort of girl; one senses she is being poked with a cattle-prod when he narrows those gorgeous eyes and mutters lines like: "This may be your country, and your office, but you're the rudest son-of-a-bitch I've ever met."

But with eyes like that, who cares?

concerts

Rats run rampant

Boomtown Rats, Teenage Head
Edmonton Coliseum

review by Brent Jeffery

I headed over to the Coliseum Friday night, fully expecting another night of screaming, pre-pubescent teens (I must be getting old), a PA system set on overdrive, and two bands playing their own particular style of formula rock. As it turned out my expectations were erroneous, and I saw one of the most interesting, entertaining concerts of the past year.

The whole evening was atypical, from beginning to end. Teenage Head started things off with their mere appearance on stage. Teenage Head, you must understand, is a band stuck in a musical time warp. Their music is very much old-style rock, late 50's influenced, with some obscure songs taken from that era.

One would therefore expect a presentation indicative of their style, right? WRONG! The only member of the band who came across that way was lead singer Frankie Venom. His bright orange suit, short hair and jerky, spasmodic movements fit perfectly with the music, making him very believable.

But the others? Forget it. They looked like they had just been transported from the thundering heavy-metal era of

the early 70's with its primordial rock mentality: long straggly hair and your basic slob look, which went out years ago, and which only hurt Teenage Head's credibility.

The Boomtown Rats, on the other hand, were excellent in all respects. With lead singer Bob Geldof showing the way, the Rats were never static for a moment.

The band came across as a cohesive unit, moving easily with the music, and letting each member take the spotlight whenever appropriate. They also established a genial rapport with the crowd, first inviting four girls to come on stage and dance, and later inviting the crowd to come to their hotel after the show.

The real strength of the Rats, however was their music. They exhibited a rarely-seen versatility, combining various rhythms, hooks and styles, and gave it their own personal trademark.

Just when you thought you had them categorized, they showed you something different. From the Latin-influenced opening song "Mood Mambo" to the ever-popular "I Don't Like Mondays" they kept you interested.

The only disappointing aspect of the whole show was the small audience — only about 4,500. For great talent like this, the lack of support is a shame. Next year let's hope Edmonton greets the Rats in numbers befitting their stature.



Ken Bloom playing the concert zither.

photo Ray Giguere

Bloom enriches English and music Foohbah woohbah John!

Ken Bloom
Provincial Museum Theater

review by Jens Andersen

Let us now praise the thousands (millions?) of obscure musicians who brighten the world, or *would* brighten it if only people paid attention to them. Let us praise in particular Ken Bloom and the excellent bandurist who shared the bill with him at the Provincial Museum Theater last Friday.

In a theater seating about 350 and holding maybe 250 the atmosphere is bound to be intimate, and Bloom made it even more so by sitting himself down in a chair on the stage and chatting about his Aunt Luba in LA, and how she liked old-country dances, and how he therefore wrote his "Waltz for Aunt Luba" for her.

Then he mimicked her reaction upon first hearing him play it: "Oh, oh, oh! It's so be-YOO-tiful! So Ukrainian!"

The audience cracked up, and Bloom began plinking out the waltz on his bandura, a stringed instrument resembling a lopsided lute. Like the rest of his instrumental work during the evening it was nothing short of wonderful.

He also played acoustic guitar, clarinet, Northumberland small pipes, concert zither ("From where you're sitting it looks like I'm playing a table.") and sang solo on such things as pornographic Irish ballads. Oh yes, he played *bottleneck* zither - for instance, on an old blues number by Sleepy John Knaubel, translated from the original German (!).

And he played "Spanish Eyes," and "Come Hither with Your Zither," which I hadn't heard since I gave up George Formby for the Beatles in 1964. And a Greek-country version of "Arkansas Traveller." Really!

He finished with a number which required the audience to sing along in a chorus of "foohbah woohbah John" and wave their arms a lot. When the audience got through a dry run with aplomb, Bloom put on a faintly contemptuous grin and said, "I just love college kids."

An encore was demanded, of course.

He came back onto the stage and cheerfully asked, "How about a song about death?" Then he launched into a song about Paddy Murphy's rather rowdy wake, which ended with Widow Murphy trashing the cops who came to quell the riot.

All in all a great concert. Ray and Jim say so too, which makes it unanimous.



Bob Geldof and guitarist singing up a storm.

photo Mike McKinney



Arts Quiz
Coming
Thursday

Do not adjust your set