

"Kong" star Charles Grodin sheds his showbiz shades

By BOB POMERANTZ

When one thinks of movie stars, one traditionally conjures up images of bronzed faces hidden behind sunglasses, pouring out bottles of Mums from silver champagne buckets. On wanting to speak with Charles Grodin, I was ushered in to a waiting room which was free from all signs of a bear skin rug.

Soon Grodin appeared and motioned me towards an inner office. "Herein lies the luxury!", I thought. To my utmost surprise, I found myself in a sparsely furnished, almost spartan room. Worse yet, Grodin was wearing neither a goldlined smoking jacket nor chinchilla pants but a simple

sweater and a pair of tan trousers. Having starred in such films as "Rosemary's Baby," "Thieves," "The Heartbreak Kid," and most recently performing with another big star in "King Kong", Grodin certainly enjoys much fame. Aside from enjoying a successful career as an actor, Grodin has also been a writer and director. Furthermore, he recently starred alongside Ellen Burstyn in "Same Time, Next Year," written by Canadian Bernie Slade.

When, asked about his future plans as an actor, Grodin remarked, "I like to produce and direct: I like to be free to follow my own mind and be in charge."

On being asked what his favourite

role was in films, Grodin immediately answered, "the one in 'King Kong'". He instantly screwed up his face, hunched his shoulders and turned into the corporate nasty that Grodin plays in "Kong". With sinister eyes darting back and forth, he remarked, "I worked with a good company, and, since we had the funds no one scrimped on anything. There existed an easy atmosphere with little pressure."

Confronting Grodin with a remark that perhaps his nasty was a stereotype, he answered, "I played the part completely seriously without any hint of tongue-in-cheek. It's a challenge: The audience must dislike me and find me funny at the same time,


making it the hardest role to play. The ironic thing is that there really are some very charming people in this world who we laugh along with but who are despicable at the same time."

When asked if the quality of acting suffers in a film like "King Kong", where the director must spend much of his time monkeying around with special effects, as compared to a film like "Rosemary's Baby," Grodin admitted, "There are, of course, other elements to consider in 'King Kong'. In a small picture, the director concentrates on each acting moment. The key to working in a film like 'Kong' was being aware of the fact that no one can or

will help you grow as an actor on the set, you must be good before doing the film".


After spending one or two whimsical moments discussing Jordan Crittenton, the rising new writer of "Unexpected Guests," Grodin again was serious. "I've learned from this business that I must be objective with myself. I don't preach to anybody else — I just try to enjoy life and I enjoy it more when I take life easier. I try to maintain a simple outlook to form a proper perspective on life." Grodin leaned backwards in his chair and was silent.

I left the office wondering if Charles Grodin even owns a pair of sunglasses. I'm sure he doesn't.




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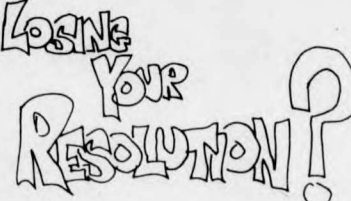
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