

Allen waxes comedic in best film in years

Broadway Danny Rose
Directed by Woody Allen
Opens tomorrow

By RICHARD GOTLIB

Like the great film comedians of the past, Woody Allen has created for himself a solid and recognizable comic persona since he began starring in his own films in 1969. Allen's valium-popping, maladroitness character has become the only reliable film comic for the present generation. Although his bag of comic tricks remains fairly constant, Allen has been able to keep audiences laughing by the different settings and situations for his "melancholy loser."

In his latest film, *Broadway Danny Rose*, Allen recedes from the extreme narrative format he used in *Zelig* to one which strikes a more satisfying balance between comedies of form and substance. Unlike *Zelig*, one can sit back and laugh with this movie rather than be distracted by clever but overworked technique.

Broadway Danny Rose is solid Woody Allen comedy filled with Allen's familiar wit and satire. The "melancholy loser" in the film is New York native Danny Rose, a personal manager of third-rate nightclub acts. He believes in all his clients but you never get to the big times with acts like a stuttering ventriloquist and "one of the great balloon folding acts in history." Allen milks the character for all it's worth with his familiar, evasive show-biz idioms and the anecdotes about the sage advice of his late Jewish relatives.



Woody Allen.

The film's skeletal structure is a series of reminiscences by a group of old time comedians swapping Danny Rose stories in a Manhattan deli. One of them tells "the best Danny Rose story of them all," the one about the time Danny got Lou Canova his comeback.

Lou Canova is a 265 lb. blubbery crooner of '50s nightclub songs who believes all the middle aged women he's singing to are undressing him with their eyes. Danny Rose arranges a big gig for Lou at the Waldorf but has to contend with the singer's adolescent insistence that his current girlfriend be brought to the big show. To comply with Lou's request Danny has to chase her through a series of bizarre escapades—following her from the

consulting bedside of a hairnetted soothsayer to the Mafioso family party of her poet ex-boyfriend where his hit men brothers come to the conclusion that Danny is trying to move in on their brother's girl.

Amidst all this picaresque comedy, Allen gets the opportunity to let loose his familiar repartee ("I need a valium the size of a hockey puck") and spring a selection of his seemingly endless gags.

Being master of his own fate, writing and directing his films, Woody Allen has evolved a distinctly personal filmmaking style—and it glows in this film. Added to the slapstick and verbal comedy in *Broadway Danny Rose*, an effective variety of visual satire. The incisive caricatures of middle-aged, cheap nightclub audiences, and the thug-infested Italian celebration add a visual element that is absent in most comedy films. The background music that helps maintain the film's bouncy pace is the silly, cheesy accordion music one might find at those unendurable family affairs. Rounding off the atmospheric elements is the rich black and white photography that embodies Woody Allen's perception of New York.

Casting for the film is also impeccable. Mia Farrow comes off better than usual as the gum-chewing bleach blond girlfriend, and Lou Canova is played beautifully by a robust, grown up cherub by the name of Nick Apollo Forte.

Broadway Danny Rose has all the hallmarks of a great comedic director, and is easily Woody Allen's best film since *Manhattan*.

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