

entertainment

“To Be Or Not To Be” ...Shouldn't have been

By WILLIAM CLAIRE
Brunswick Staff

To Be Or Not To Be is a remake of the 1942 Ernst Lubitsch film that starred Jack Benny and Carole Lombard (her last performance) in a black comedy about the wartime experiences of a Polish acting troupe.

The only other notable feature of this dismal production is the premier on-screen pairing of Mel Brooks and Ann Bancroft, real-life husband and wife, as the Bronskis, headlines of the Bronski Theatrical Troupe, world famous all over Poland.

The film's biggest disappointment is the all-too-brief appearance of Charles Durning and Christophehr Lloyd as the nasty Nazis. The movie's highlight, Durning and Lloyd are a visual Laurel and Hardy, providing the comedy's only comic relief thanks to some clockwork timing and genuine talent.

Even fans of Mel Brooks --such creatures still exist

--will not be pleased. A Brooks film is billed with predictable sight gags and drawnout jokes with predictable punchlines which work because of Brooks' personal zaniness. Without his special something, the humour is boring.

But, and it's a big but, Brooks had no hand in writing To Be Or Not To Be which means he has to say someone else's lines which means that the film is doomed to failure because Brooks can't act. He is a writer. When he can't write lines that match his rhythms, speech patterns and special comic intuition, the vehicle for his brand of humor falls flat.

Bancroft as Anna Bronski finds herself in a role offering comic possibilities in contrast to her more typical dramatic performances. At least she enjoyed the film, camping her way from scene to scene as the actress with eyes for a handsome young Polish pilot (Tim Matheson).

Oh that the audience



Charles Durning's portrayal of the bungling col. Erhardt is the highlight of To Be Or Not To Be, starring Mel Brooks.

could have shared her sustained enjoyment.

SKI YOUR BRAINS OUT --Hot Dog...the movie! is an excuse to play out, in living color, the sexual fantasies of adolescents and post-adolescents who forgot to

grow up, complete with North America's ultimate juvenile fantasy -- the Playboy bunny.

Just like Playboy, Hot Dog pretends to offer something of merit to disguise its real intent. Ostensibly, the movie recounts the adventures of a handsome young farmboy (Patrick Huaser) who heads to Squaw Valley to try his luck in the World Cup Ski competitions. Along the way he picks up a nubile 17-year-old female (Tracy N. Smith) who complains all the while about all the males who try to get into her pants. Her secret desire, shortly thereafter, is to get into farmboy's pants (of course).

In the movie's early minutes and on and off during the final 20 minutes or so, some crackerjack photography manages to capture the exhilarating experience of challenging the slopes. The stuff in between makes for an oversized weiner in an undersized bun, if you will.

Shannon Tweed, who holds the dubious distinction of being a Newfie bunny, makes a guest appearance. She ain't in the film for her acting. What she does best is just what

you'd expect a playmate of the year to do best. The younger Smith also gets her licks. Tweed, however, does it better; she's obviously had more experience.

HITCHCOCK RETURNS

--Beginning tonight and every week for the next five weeks, Nashwaaksis Twin Cinemas will present a series of five Alfred Hitchcock films which have never been released to theatre or television since their initial appearances.

Leading off is *Rear Window*, a 1954 release starring James Stewart as a news photographer who is laid up with a broken leg and sees more than he bargained for, and Grace Kelly as his fiancée. Featured are Raymond Burr, Wendell Corey and Thelma Ritter.

Other films in the series include *Rope* (1948), *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1955), *The Trouble With Harry* (1956) and *Vertigo* (1959). Four of the films star James Stewart.

A box office discount is available to UNB and St. Thomas students upon presentation of student cards.

“Sullivan's Travels” showing Tonight and Saturday

Preston Sturges, a filmmaker with a message - or more properly many messages - wrote and directed this very funny movie in 1941. It is considered by many critics to be his best film.

In the past, he explored such diverse themes as the cult of heroism and the cult of riches satirically in such fine films as “Hail the Conquering Hero”, “Christmas In July” and “The Lady Eve.” Tonight he takes on Hollywood! “Sullivan's Travels” is one of a series of films that Sturges made using the same cast of supporting actors - William Demarest is especially good here. It stars Joel McCrea and Veronica Lake.

John L. Sullivan (played by McCrea) is a highly successful film director in depression era Hollywood.

Feeling somewhat guilty over the prestige he has gained for making a series of cutesy musicals while there are “breadlines” forming all over America: he decides to start making “social treatises” with such lofty titles as “Brother, Where Art Thou?”

Sullivan is bright enough to realize that being isolated in Hollywood hasn't given him much opportunity to observe the “common man.” Common men don't exist in Hollywood and so his travels commence. He sets out dressed as a poor vagabond (courtesy of “wardrobe”) from his luxurious mansion. He is followed by a fully equipped mobile home complete with a secretary, maid, cook and radio reporter. His attempts to shake this coterie are hilarious and, after a

number of false starts, he finally finds himself alone, poor and in somewhat dire straits; exactly what he'd wanted to enable him to discover the meaning of poverty. But, I won't reveal any more, you'll have to see it.

This film is something of a self-justification for Sturges who, as I've said, used satire to convey his messages. He made his first film in 1940 and, after a series of successes, virtually disappeared from moviedom. Though few people have heard of him, his talent as displayed in this film clearly rates him a place of honor on anyone's list of great directors.

Sullivan's Travels will be shown Friday and Saturday, January 27 and 28 at 8:00 p.m. in Tilley 102.